

A TESTAMENT OF TIME

A TESTAMENT OF TIME Volume 1



Enayetullah Khan

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VOLUME I

HOLIDAY
Columns and Editorials of
Enayetullah Khan
1965 – 1975

Holiday Publication

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30 Tejgaon Industrial Area
Dhaka-1208, Bangladesh

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This volume is dedicated to my late father Justice Abdul Jabbar Khan, (—1983) who would amuse himself with, rather than disapprove of, the rebellious writings in Holiday, even when he was the ceremonial second man in Pakistan's state hierarchy, and to my late mother Saleha Khatun, (—1950) who left this world in my early boyhood.

And also to my children — Nasreen (b. 1963), Mumith (b. 1966) and Masud (b. 1970) — who had to brave the traumas and the upheavals of the time and grew with Holiday's uneven, and adventurous struggle.

Foreword

When Holiday appeared in cold print as a broadsheet weekender on August 1, 1965, it was thought to be a maverick of sorts. Take or leave a year or two from the age-group combination of the movers of it, including me, all of us were 26-plus on the wrong side. But Holiday and we were on the right side of the time when it came to rebellion and adventure. The roaring sixties were then in full boom, and Holiday sought out its own high decibel to register its voice atop, and create its niche. Urbane, elitist and irreverent, and oftener putting on left ideological whiskers so fashionable to grow in those times and several years after, Holiday ever since has travelled down the road of combat journalism at some peril of thorns in its side.

Hence Holiday was not perhaps the most fitting name for a paper of its kind. The name was deliberately chosen to outfox the authorities who would clamp a stern no-no on any publication smacking of politics. In fact, the hint of it came from two Bengali superior service officials in charge of dealing with the formal declaration (registration or permission) for any publication. They were the then Additional Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka, Ayubur Rahman (since retired as cabinet secretary), and the then City Superintendent of Police, the late Habibur Rahman (who retired as the Inspector General of Police). The feint worked and Holiday was off the hook of the intelligence hounds.

That being the birth-pang story, travel and leisure were not on Holiday's menu, at least not for the time that was. Politics was, and so were

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polemics. By then the 1947 Radcliffe award of an incongruous union of one-nation-two-countries, euphemistically called Pakistan, was about to explode into a bad myth. It was fun poking at it — some time in light-hearted naughty jibes, and increasingly in strident onslaughts on the military-bureaucratic oligarchy of Pakistan, whose sceptres lay some thousand miles afar as the crow flies. Mountbatten and Radcliffe be damned. A double-winger Pakistan, with each flank tugging away at opposite ends, was wrecked in mid-air but not without wreaking a barbaric genocide on the eastern ground.

That just about sums up the mood of the time when Holiday cast itself somewhat cavalierly, if not romantically, in an anti-cavalier and anti-romantic brutal drama of the birth of a nation. It was no chocolate cream war. It was a bitter do or die struggle in self-defense and for liberation from a demonic genocidal West Pakistan military both within and without the soil of East Bengal, now Bangladesh. The Cold War and regional geo-politics notwithstanding, Bangladesh came out the winner in a welter of blood on December 16, 1971.

A run-up to March 25, 1971 is not intended in this foreword as the year and date-wise anthology of articles speaks for itself. Holiday was formally banned by the occupation regime with consequential freezing of accounts, impounding of passports, denial of travelling out of country to the immediate family, providential return from the jaws of death in the hands of the military on April 1 and May 20, 1971, subsequent dispersal of the family to safer places, abandonment of the residence and finally myself taking refuge incognito

in a French friend's house to avert cognizance and the killer-hunt of the military and that of the Al-Badr, the latter having committed the most cold-blooded elimination of intellectuals in the terminal days of 1971. (The Al-Badr episode has since been documented by Bergman of Channel 4 of London and screened on the TV in London and elsewhere in 1995). But then again martyrdom is not a political argument. The whole people of Bangladesh suffered similar or worse fate during those dark and yet glorious days. All my brothers, excepting one trapped in China, were in the war-front, though having to bear with the unwelcome stamp of the so-called Maoist ideology tagged to my younger brother Rashed Khan Menon, and hence with establishment hostility on the Indian soil. The CPI(M), then down and not-so-out, and the guerrilla commanders came to their rescue in providing them shelter and recruiting them in the guerrilla ranks — in that order.

Holiday resumed publication on January 1, 1972 and soon found itself at odds with the political commissars of the Calcutta-based Mujibnagar elite, then in charge in Dhaka, and of course the political armed wing of the Bengal Liberation Force (BLF) or Mujib Bahini that was super-autonomously raised by the Indian army in Dehradun over the head of the legally-constituted government-in-exile. Afsan Chowdhury in his prologue offers the narrative of how the post-Independence writings in Holiday stirred the hornet's nest. Holiday's publication had to be suspended for a couple of months in 1973 when the printing presses refused to entertain it. No one else was prepared to incur the wrath of the establishment in independent Bangladesh. Late Sikander Abu Zafar, well-known

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cognoscente and poet, lent Holiday his print-shop's seal. As the mercury of wrath lowered with the passage of days, Holiday was back again; but establishment calumny and obscenities in the establishment-controlled media and Parliament would not leave it alone. The Indian press, both right-wing as well as Moscow-roader, would heap epithets on it with unremitting regularity. And Izvestia declared us the enemy paper. It was a great time to fight back and take on what was to become the one-party state. Holiday was finally banned on May 13, 1975 when the chariot of one-party had started rolling down the political avenues and closing all of them. I was sent to prison under the Special Powers' Act. After the one-party was in place with devotees lining up to join it and pay homage (of which indignity I was blissfully spared for my absence from the scene), the God of polity smiled on me. I was released from jail on July 17, 1975 and was granted an hour-long audience by the late leader, President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on July 29, 1975.

This anthology is the first in a 3-volume publication covering three distinct periods — 1965-1975, 1976-1990 and 1991 to date. This volume contains the articles from the inception of Holiday in August 1965 till its forced closure on May 13, 1975. Afsan Chowdhury took the trouble of selecting the articles and arranging them in a chronological and thematic order besides writing an eloquent prologue to this volume. The publication of it was long overdue as Afsan's own part, including the manuscript, was ready and complete by 1991. My colleague in Holiday, Tarik Ahsan, went through the manuscript with a fine comb and weeded out repetitions and edited the

copies wherever it was absolutely necessary. He also scrutinised the copies word by word, and lent his touch of refinement to the entire manuscript.

The epilogue is a reprint from Bombay's prestigious 'Economic and political weekly' (EPW). It was written by Dr. Ashok Mitra, a former finance minister in the CPI(M) government in West Bengal, an economist who worked for the World Bank for some years and also served as adviser to Indian premier Mrs. Gandhi in the post '71 days. It appeared in the EPW under his well-known pen-name AM.

Last but not the least, I owe it to Abul Khair Khan and Nazma Siddiqi who, together with me, bottomed out our piggy banks to start Holiday. Khair, having qualified for the Bar from Lincon's Inn, and belonging to the left-nationalist group active in London in those days, had just returned to Dhaka. Nazma and her husband Hafiz G.A. Siddiqi were about to leave for their PhD studies in the US. Chowdhury Tanbir Ahmed Siddiky volunteered to lend his name as the publisher since I was carrying the stamp of radical student politics. But a number of other compatriots like Syed Shamsul Huq (versatile writer and literary luminary), M. Aslam (who joined Holiday as its first Executive Editor and was one of the finest scribes of masterful English), Barrister K. Z. Alam Shelley, insurance prodigy Shamsul Alam and well-known Chartered Accountant Fazle Ali would sit together (recall the 'Silver Spoon' restaurant in Motijheel's old Chamber Building), and do the brainstorming.

And the team that lent Holiday so much of splendour, and an audacious editorial signature of its own, were myself, M. Aslam, late Shahidul Huq, Tawfiq Aziz Khan, Ataus Samad, Sayed

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My late father Justice Abdul Jabbar Khan, who was the Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan (1964-68), enjoyed Holiday's anti-establishment target-shooting though he was second in order of precedence in Field Marshal Ayub Khan's hierarchy of power.

Kamaluddin, Fazle Rashid, Fazal M. Kamal, N.M. Harun and Achintya Sen. Alamgir Kabir, another brilliant member of the left-nationalist London activist group, joined us later.

The original team has dispersed over time, some having gone different ways and some others prematurely leaving the world. Among the latter are late M. Aslam, late Shahidul Huq and filmmaker and critic Alamgir Kabir. Ataus Samad and Kamaluddin still write. Fazle Rashid does it as and when he gets bored with his own leisure and gastronomic indulgences.

This volume would not have materialised (hopefully the other two as well) had it not been for the dogged persistence of M. Anwar Sadiq, Managing Editor of Holiday, and long-enduring management compatriot after our first Management person, A.T.M. Waziullah, opted for business.

My late father Justice Abdul Jabbar Khan, who was the Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan (1964-68), enjoyed Holiday's anti-establishment target-shooting though he was second in order of precedence in Field Marshal Ayub Khan's hierarchy of power. He was one of my most regular subscribers and a cover-to-cover reader of Holiday till his death in 1983.

My immediate young family, besides the extended family including brothers, ~~Sadeq~~ Khan, ~~Obaidullah~~ Khan, ~~Rashed~~ Khan Menon, Sultan Mahmud Khan and ~~Shahidullah~~ Khan, stood by me through thick and thin and shared my rigours with Holiday's adventure ungrudgingly. Sometimes the rigours were too harsh. But then, as they make me proud, I hope I make them proud too. And, I wish, my readers do as well.

— ENAYETULLAH KHAN

Prologue

It all began quite innocently. There was to be a newspaper, coming out every Sunday (weekly holiday in non-Islamic Pakistan), appropriately called "Holiday" which would be young, angry and strident. It would specialise in telling people off, focussing on issues like disparity between the Eastern and Western wing of Pakistan, dominance of Western influence over the political economic format of the country and what the paper thought was the basic inability of the non-Leftist forces to lead Pakistan and East Pakistan to Valhalla. In some ways how it was being said was as important as what Holiday intended to talk about. It was also in English which meant that its appeal was to be to a small group of readers who sympathised with its approach and knew the language well enough to understand what Holiday was talking about. The sponsors of Holiday thought that at least in East Pakistan a small group of this type of readers were awakening from a weekend bed eager to read what they intended to provide.

Much of this centred around its Editor Enayetullah Khan who it would turn out to be was the last of the hands-on-Editors. Coming from an elite family, bred in elite culture, familiar with the nuances of the elite classes and groups he claimed to be a Marxist, at least of sorts. His hero was Maulana Bhashani, the peasant leader and political guru, whose vast range of contradictions and consistencies drew people from every political shade to seek refuge and wisdom. And there was an element of the same innocence in the words of Enayetullah as well, as he stridently supported the Maulana and his populist politics in a language the Maulana didn't understand well and didn't care to. If that was Holiday's contradiction, it was its strength as well because Holiday became one of the most sophisticated articulators of the Left nationalist cause of the Eastern Wing. It

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supported the nationalist sentiments of the people but didn't do so from the same platform as did the mainstream parties including Awami League, soon to grow into historical proportions and lead the people into a spectacular electoral victory in 1970 and change the course of history not only for Pakistan and its Eastern wing but establish parameters of political relationships which would ultimately push Holiday into playing the major role in the history of its nation too.

The period before the war of liberation, stretching back to the mid-sixties, was an era of optimism. Some of the facts of life, present or waiting in the future, were beyond question or doubt. Such as that the cause of much of the misery of Bangladesh was the result of West Pakistani colonialism and that there was nothing in the world that Leftist medicine couldn't cure. EK took these two as the wheels of his editorial chariot. And as it rolled down the tracks of its columns, there was cheering from the leading crowd and a legion formed, made up of fellow travellers in the truest sense. The Left parties, major, minor or splintered, peeped through the windows opened by the paper and soon after the first print order an identity card began to appear, a signature become visible. Later, this was to become a feature, a significant part of what Holiday represented once and now fading out under the pressure of history reeling almost out of control in contemporary Bangladesh.

The role of Holiday can be distinguished into three main eras; the first period runs from its birth to the days of March 1971; the second from the emergence of Bangladesh till the end of the Mujib era and the last are the years after. The first is obviously the formative years but some of the opinion and format patterns which were to emerge later became very clear even in this phase. The second era is what is termed by most as Holiday's finest hour as it did a David with Awami League's Goliath with considerable success. The final stage was

inaugurated with the fall of Mujib and the entry of Enayetullah Khan into the establishment stables and obvious changes that arise when the driving force behind the scythe goes and sits on the other side of the field. How can one separate the dancer from the dance?

Between 1965 and 1971, EK and Holiday wrestled with the twin giants tugging the opposite way. As it tried to tear the Pakistani establishment to smaller pieces, it found the shadow of Awami League growing. Unable to side with either, it must have been a difficult time as more and more people refused to hear what wasn't being said by Awami League as it entered its own greatest phase before it became after 1971 just another party unable to cope with the demands of a newly emerged state.

Holiday caught AL just before it went into full capital letters. The insensitivity of the Pakistani rulers had become clear in the defence strategy adopted by Pakistan under which East Pakistan's security lay, according to some mad logic, in defending West Pakistan well. The insecurity proved to be the proverbial straw for many East Wingers and suddenly it became clear that the central government saw the national security and defence question of Pakistan as basically that of West Pakistan. So when the Taskhent Declaration sponsored by Soviet Union which brought 'peace' between Pakistan and India after the war of 1965 was welcomed by East Pakistani politicians, the same was condemned by the majority of the West Pakistanis who termed it a sellout. More important the West Pakistani journalists and politicians attacked the East Pakistanis for welcoming this declaration citing it as another example of the Bengali alienation from the Pakistani mainstream.

Almost coinciding with the furore came the 6-points of Awami League in 1966 wherein SK. Mujib laid out his formula for the 'liberation' of the Eastern wing with a vague nod towards the notions of the Pakistan

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that had been in force since 1947. The six points was dubbed secessionist and amidst a mini mass movement SK Mujib was interned. But Enayetullah Khan didn't see the 6-points as anything spectacular. His writings show that he had very little confidence in the ability of AL to deliver the politico-economic goods and he didn't mince his words saying so. (Feb 20, 1966). But right before his perplexed eyes Mujib and his 6-points grew to grasp the hand of the nation, some reluctantly proffered, others eager and led it towards 1971.

His sense of disappointment at seeing Awami League take over the reins of the growing militant Bengali tide was something that cut across all the leftists who swore by Mao's China at that time. To them in general and EK in particular, the groundswell which was sweeping Mujib to the forefront was against the grain of 'real history'. Mujib was a bourgeois and a middle class leader who had no business being at the barricades which Holiday saw going up when it looked at its motherland. It had hoped even at that time that the Left under various pro-Chinese flags would rise and snatch the leadership of the tide as it swelled and groaned waiting to rush the shores of the decisive hour. But the Left on whom EK pinned so much of his misplaced hope had already passed out of the centre stage, and was by then a prisoner of its own incomplete Marxism and infantile logic. Placing its money on its dogmatic flawed tongue, it spoke of fighting the feudals when the people felt like entering combat with the West Pakistanis. It wasn't merely a bad reading of history by them but the basic defect of a defunct system of analysis as applied by Bangladeshis.

It is curious to note that despite a legion of tremendously sincere, committed and sacrificing workers, the many CPs of Bangladesh have always managed to miss the bus of history and this was even after the ticket was thrust into their hand. Or else they took the wrong one.

But neither EK nor Holiday lost the perspective. Ek's beloved Maulana, who had more enigmas under his ample kurta and not only for arrivals but departures as well, also slowly pulled the plug on the Leftist boat till it sunk under indecision and took this opportunity to lend his crucial support to one man who had received it more than anybody else from him—the Left's anathema, SK. Mujibur Rahman.

Was the Maulana being facetious or even flippant on a truly grand scale, something never seen before in the history of this sub-continent, by letting the left down while his acts rendered invaluable support to Mujib who had stolen the Marxist thunder without the Marx? Or was it that he alone, among those who saw a socialist dawn under an independent flag, knew that only Mujib had the strength to lead the Eastern wing of Pakistan into Bangladeshi statehood? Whatever be the truth the fact was that the one popular leader that the Left had in its camp didn't lead it but let the people decide, some say with Bhashani helping the Awami League by very subtly egging on the people by posing as a 'prophet of violence' and uncompromising extremist. This may have had two effects. First, by this stance he allowed the mainstream to elope with Awami League and secondly, he became an effective pressure point whereby the opponents preferred to negotiate with Mujib, the moderate, and AL came closer to being the 'bourgeois Babu'. Bhashani's capping move, many might say, is the refusal to let NAP(B) be a party to the election of 1970, where its own well-respected leaders could have split the nationalist vote and given Mujib less than what he finally got. But Mujib had the full run of the field alone and came out as the uncrowned king of the land waiting for the coronet, lying a few hundred miles away, which never arrived. But there is no doubt that the unquestioned leadership which AL had in and after 1971 was much assisted by the decisions of Bhashani whether he took them for that purpose or not.

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It was on one such person that EK put his trust. But EK's instincts, bolstered by his own sort of Marxism, didn't let him down. He saw the conflict and the tussle and supported the cause, the spirit and the fight. Holiday, treating the events of 1969, when the great popular uprising against Ayub Khan took place, makes very interesting reading. It became a truly populist paper. Had the history been right, had the language been right, it would have fuelled the aroused masses but Holiday spoke only to a few. Far fewer than it deserved but this too is fact that there was a growing number of people who not only found stinging analysis and polemical attacks but rousing language and emotional appeals and it is in 1969 that the signature of Holiday began to be confirmed. It was an English language weekly but it spoke from the barricade even if that visit didn't last the weekend or overnight.

During these days Enayetullah Khan spoke of the masses. The issue wasn't muddled up by continually referring to the class conflict or rising against the feudal landlord but it rightly spoke of the fight against the ruling coterie, against the oppression, against the discrimination which East Pakistan was suffering from. But even in such pieces, he held on to a tenuous faith in the Left, in its ability to deliver the political goods when there was no such sign around. If EK's strength lay in understanding that the centre stage belonged to the broad masses and whoever commanded their attention dominated the course of history, his weakness was in believing in the Left almost unconditionally. In some ways this seems almost like a faith. Even if his writings didn't give any undue importance to the Left, he would come out in the end with an endorsement of the broad Left without really qualifying. This was the grand tradition of the era and the region perhaps and he was not outside it but unlike most others he had the maturity' to recognise, albeit grudgingly, that Mujib and his Awami League had stolen history from under the corporate nose

of the Left. And here is a certain poignance when he wrote in 'Mujib's Release; A triumph of the people'; '... 11-point programme has now the unqualified support of two parties with mass basis-Awami League (six points) and NAP (Bhashani Group), a united Front of the two is probably more than a likely speculation. They feel that only the united action of these two parties can win political and economic emancipation for the people of East Pakistan.' (February 23, 1969)

Here was the essential Holiday editor, the quintessential Enayetullah Khan. He was probably one of the very few, if not one of the very very few, who believed NAP and AL could unite. He considered the 11-point the cementing factor, a last drop of glue which could put the two diverse trends seeking populist emancipation together. It is easy to call it naive, even easier a nod to political sentimentalism but it was ultimately idealism. He had, despite odds, to find space to believe that destiny belonged to both, NAP and AL. It was a broad vision, a wish for the ideal solution (AL's strength and NAP's purity;) but there was little to suggest that there was sympathy in either AL or NAP circles for such thoughts. It was in the loneliness of his political beliefs that Enayetullah could stamp Holiday with a distinct identity of its own.

In the election of 1970, Awami League swept to power and Holiday welcomed the victory of the people but again doubted the ability of Sk. Mujib to deal with the situation. He saw him as not radical enough to handle the dangerous phase of history which 'Bengal' was stepping into. And in some ways was already heaping his misplaced trust on the radical elements within that party. Scolding Awami League for consorting with the 'vested interests,' he still felt that true liberation would come from the left revolutionaries even if they were within AL. In hindsight it was more wishful thinking than anything else and a result of his inability to trust Awami League

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with the duty of writing the history of a nation. He called his 1971 new year piece 'History beckons Sk. Mujib,' but in that article took a swipe at AL's alleged lack of commitment to the cause of a sovereign East Pakistan and even a Lahore resolution-based confederation. He felt the power of the army holding back the ropes of the carriage of democracy and warned AL not to do a deal with them. In such pieces, he sounded despondent and angry at the leaders who do didn't seem to be sufficiently aware of the dangers waiting in the wings of near time.

Within a few short weeks, the situation had become almost unbearably tense with the central leadership of Pakistan refusing to hand over power to the Awami League, who were, according to law, the legitimate rulers-designate of both the wings. As the heat increased and the shadow of some unheard tragedy hung in the air, the words of Enayetullah Khan joined other voices to form a prophetic chorus. The fight was no longer a matter of handing over power to a party, it was one of recognising the right of a people.

'Bengal dishonoured again' was how EK described the situation. '...Bengal's struggle/has reached a pitch when spectacular measures of mass arrests, demonstrations of armed might, display of lethal weapons and the showering of a rain of bullets do not any more scare the people back into their shells.'...

'SK. Mujib must decide now or be expelled from history'... 'Let the will to die be carried to its logical end under a scientific leadership. Let us brace ourselves for the people's democratic struggle against national oppression on Bengal, coupled with a people's war on feudalism, capitalism and imperialism.'...

In many ways this sums up the writings of Enayetullah Khan and the spirit of Holiday which he inspired and nursed. It was aware of history, aware of the junctures of events, aware of the leadership of Awami League as it tried to grip with the momentousness of

the force it unleashed, represented and tried to control, aware of the failure of the forces EK would have wanted to see win, aware that he was an observer with Cassandraish overtones but finally aware that the wheels of history had gained far too much momentum to swing into a path not charted by forces beyond control of anyone.

The last piece written before 1971 and selected here is chillingly correct in its prophecy. It deserves to be read as a work of journalism which carried the strength of insight so acute that it read the footsteps of history to come almost to a word. It stated in no uncertain terms that there was going to be no settlement and no peace, no legal and natural transfer of power, no preventing of bloodshed, no final victory of the Bengali people through the power of the vote. All the years of the quest for constitutional solutions had come to nought and it made no sense to search for a civilised system of answers because it was absent in the Pakistani system itself as it existed then. It was a tragedy to be part of that country, tragedy to be a citizen of that land but it was a bigger tragedy to be able to report of an impending genocide of his own people as Enayetullah Khan did on March 14th 1971.

'Anticipations of a settlement notwithstanding, the uneasy truce between Bengal and the military establishment of Gen. Yahya Khan may finally turn out to be a deceptive stratagem of repressive violence. Faced as they are with a people's war, or at least the beginning of one, when they cannot isolate the fish from the sea, and when counter-insurgency techniques have failed to work, they might as well go for indiscriminate violence or genocide which literally means the total extermination of an intransigent people'. (They Are Not Finished With You Yet, Bengal, Holiday March 14, 1975.)

The events had been read with frightful accuracy and EK was proven right. The war machine would

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descend and there was no preparation to fight back. Exception perhaps there could never be, but that is another question. As far as EK and Holiday were concerned, the first phase was dead and waiting to be burned in more senses than one. The role which Holiday had aspired to in the years before liberation was to descend on its shoulders soon as opponents changed and old foes retired, to battle each other with no holds barred. It ushered in for Holiday and Enayetullah Khan their august hour.

When Bangladesh became independent the nation may not have been ready to tackle the problems of a post-liberation society but EK was ready to do his job. The long fought-with enemy which had led the people had now performed its historical task and the mantle of that duty and halo of the task was gone. Suddenly Awami League was just one of the parties going to function in Bangladesh. With a long history of crusading against the ability of Awami League to play the Awami helmsman, Holiday was poised to do what it always wanted to.

Had Awami League been less keen to establish its monopoly over Bangladesh, the situation may have been quite different and what was to be Holiday's crusade may even have limped off to an ordinary slugging match but AL was insistent on grabbing all the grub and glory. It refused to recognise anyone's role in 1971 excepts its own. Every man who was not an Awami Leaguer became a collaborator or a betrayer.

The euphoria of liberation and victory was so intense that there was an acceptance of whatever AL did for the first few weeks and months. But it soon became obvious that AL in 1971 and early '72 had drawn a clear line between who was a friend and who was not. Since most were not party members and didn't have relatives in the right places, the burden of living under Mujib's Bangladesh began to be felt. There was no opposition party, no leader daring or able enough to

stand up and say the truth, no forum where dissent could be heard. It was in this choking atmosphere that history beckoned Enayetullah Khan and his Holiday.

There was growing resentment against the policy of exclusiveness which AL adopted. As post-liberation war booties were being distributed to the chosen ones, the overwhelming majority of the people who had not crossed over to India, or could not and therefore had to undergo the life of the interned, found themselves being discriminated against. There was a hint in the Awami League run air that only the people who had formed part of the government-in-exile could claim to be patriots. All others and that meant all others were traitors of sorts. It also became convenient to deny anyone his right or wrong by labelling him a 'collaborator'. During that phase of life when everything was uncertain, the suffix became the most 'important word' in a person's life.

When Holiday wrote the article 'Sixty Five Million collaborators' (Feb 6, 1972), it created a constituency, the best thing that can happen to a publication. Although a popular government, the AL was losing the flags and the confetti showered on it with undue haste. The people expected an instant return on the sacrifices made while the inexperienced and perhaps even inept government, struggling to bring about a semblance of governing, failed to deliver even the basics. The gap between expectation and delivery was heightened by the rise of price, smuggling, shortages, manipulated to some extent by AL favourites, and overall breakdown of AL law and order. The crowning part was the use of 'discrimination.' And so the cause and the constituency was there and Holiday stepped in.

AL and its supporters seemed to be accusing 65 million of collaborating with the invaders, and Holiday became the knight in metaphorically shining armour of brown newsprint defending the same. The old resentment and perhaps something even more deep came to the forefront of the weekly. Holiday took aim

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using every arm that is in a journal's arsenal. EK was straightforward, obtuse, jargon-ridden and full of similes and metaphors but the essential message was sent across. The AL, just because it led the war, didn't automatically gain the right to rule. And the way it was behaving as victors clearly, in EK's mind, supported this contention.

Perhaps, the reason why Holiday and its Editor found space in the history of early Bangladesh was the fact that it was for a long time the only voice protesting, the only words criticising, the only paper disagreeing. There was the sobering example of Observer's legendary Editor Abdus Salam suggesting that Awami League should form a national government and finding himself paid for his reason and lack of farsight by quickly losing the job. He was not eased out, but unceremoniously fired. AL of 1972 was no respecter of men, having earned the laurels of war. For them it was still a war, perhaps a less violent one but belligerencies hadn't ceased by their counting. They found no reason to share the glory and the booty with others which basically was what all others who didn't belong to Awami League were saying.

But there was very little AL could do against Holiday except abuse it because Holiday was privately controlled by EK himself. The only thing to do for the time being was to hurl back some abuse from where so much of it was coming. Holiday became the favourite target of some AL leaders too.

But the advantage was with Enayetullah Khan. In the absence of any meaningful opposition in the form of a publication, party, or a Parliament, the entire onus of being the mouthpiece of growing disgruntlement fell on Holiday's weekly shoulders. And it was not one to shirk this responsibility. It became the opposition or at least the conduit through which the dissenters in Mujib's Bangladesh, circa 1972, spoke. Till JSD, the party made of the radicals

within the folds of AL itself came away, breaking up with the mother party in late 1977, Holiday had to fulfill this task alone.

That doesn't mean that task was fulfilled with the kind of 'official sounding seriousness' reserved for such onerous callings. The words were written by Enayetullah Khan with seriousness and dedication but he was hardly the one to change his style simply because the job to be done was one which Parliaments usually did. His reactions were mostly instantaneous and the pleasure he got in telling off the powers that be in long, jargon-filled, metaphor mixed hyperbole-scented sentences was shared by his readers. Of course he could be ponderous and obtuse and once in a while he got away with the faith of his readers on his side but the prime purpose of it all was served admirably. He set the terms of reference for an opposition at a time when nobody dared to raise one's head in a country swiftly racing towards what was construed by most as fascism.

EK mentioned that in one of his articles as well; but by then he had earned some fearsome enemies. He again found himself as the champion of the Left, the same left he had hoped would win the people's war though it was badly mauled by the events and time. But there was another left, now a new one, which was intent on violently overthrowing Mujib. Retaliation to such wishes was swift and direct as the dreaded Rakkhi Bahini was raised to ensure the safety of the rulers. And although never accepted by the rulers of that time, the death of those who belonged to the left and opposed Mujib, without trial, at the hands of the Rakkhi Bahini was common. Even if not true, this is what was believed by most Bangladeshis.

"When the Prime Minister orders the police to shoot at sight 'Naxalites' and that too in a mammoth public meeting, no higher legal sanction was required to endorse political killing at the state level... Thus the police force, which has tasted blood for the first

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E_k began to see another set of players who could actually replace the AL of Mujib with a radical left clone of the same.

time since independence... may now train their newly- acquired automatics on their chosen victims without having to justify the establishment killings" (Sanction to kill dissenters) (April 12, 1972). If Enayetullah Khan was right in his instincts to support the anti-Mujib caucus because the AL was reeling towards a direly high level of no-confidence, his trust in the Leftists was misplaced and overdone. His own brand of fellow travellers were of the Maoist variety; but the various shards, splinters and bits added up to much less than the grand vehicle of entry into history's centre stage which EK liked to fantasize about. His own understanding of Marxism wasn't deep and he himself admits this today.

But this was no loss really. One took EK's Marxism in the same spirit with which it was written because what came across was not the substance of the theory but the essence of the outrage. The Marxist bit was salad dressing and that's how it has stayed still. It didn't interfere with what he wished to say and how. Plus, given the level of Marxist acumen in this country, few could have noticed the difference any way.

Of course, EK believed it was a magic formula; and even after all the retrogression that Marxism has gone through recently, after all the humiliation at every level, some respect for it is still there in his heart for that nearly extinct belief system. In the early seventies it was so strong that when JSD was formed and decked with Marxist slogans, EK began to see another set of players who could actually replace the AL of Mujib with a radical left clone of the same. The JSD leaders suddenly became Marxist heroes and revolutionaries. In fact he began to see the communist delivery van with the early morning bottle of salvation in every party that swore by the Marxist pantheon. This over-enthusiasm and uneditor-like attitude runs through the pages of Holiday without respite. It was the incipient politician in him who saw

answers in dogma and theory. The healthy dose of cynicism that was reserved for the non-left sort of politics could have been spread by him over the Leftists as well to make it look more evenly balanced. It would have been worth some more applause. After all, the Left ultimately did capitulate and picked its bag to walk into respectability after Mujib's fall in 1975 and finally obscurity after 1982. In fact, Mujib's final blow to the Left was to show them that while his own party could survive without him, the Left could not. EK missed out on this point. By overrating the Left he may have betrayed his lack of total commitment to the role of an Editor. His predictions on what the Left could do and couldn't proved to be wrong. His instincts in this case were ruled by his heart. Perhaps that may explain why soon after the fall of Mujib, he left Holiday to take up a public career, which though successful has never matched his previous one.

One of the reasons why Enayetullah had to wear the theorist's coat was because the establishment was wearing a Mujib one. The sartorial and the ideological were both the dominant fashion of the time whether by choice, lack of option or understanding. In the longest article written in Holiday, its Editor tried to define what he felt was politically sick with the ruling group of his day. Mujibbad swelled and rolled on towards its totalitarian destiny and in 'The Bangladesh Syndrome' the internal contradictions were spelled out. What the piece set out to achieve was 'expose' the exploitative and corrosive nature of a 'theory' which had more to do with political expediency than political science. In many ways, this is the most well laid-out indictment of the Mujib era where journalese and political analysis are married with a degree of skill. The shadow of Marxism weighs heavily but the saving grace is that the piece could be written in the same tone and perhaps the same language by a non-Marxist critic as well.

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The government in power didn't hesitate to attack Holiday in the same spirit that Holiday did. Whatever be the merit of the fight, there is no doubt that there was no shortage of caustic energy on either side.

The election of 1973 which saw AL sweep to a stupendous and ill-gotten victory didn't generate optimism nor create a greater sense of accommodation within the AL. This party between 1972 and 1975 simply found it difficult to accept that its opponents could be patriots too. It set a tradition which hasn't flagged till today. And as the circulation of Holiday rose so did the wrath of the Awami Leaguers. The government in power didn't hesitate to attack Holiday in the same spirit that Holiday did. Whatever be the merit of the fight, there is no doubt that there was no shortage of caustic energy on either side. When Enayetullah Khan wrote 'Holiday will resist all pressures' (Sept 30, 1973), he was courting danger. Although there was already a large number of Holiday lovers in the upper echelons of society (there still is and some protection was readily available), the seams of establishment patience were already being tried. EK's confidence was not short. He maintained; 'I was arrested, tortured, .. Holiday was banned... But I don't consider these as my defense since I don't believe that martyrdom is a political argument.... I categorically maintain my position regarding the divisive role of the Mujibnagar escapees and their mad rush for the spoils of power and privileges. I take off my hat to the freedom fighters who staked their lives for the cause of the motherland ... Holiday has always stood by their cause and will always do so.' It was a stirring defence and for sometime the wolf with the ban notice was kept at bay.

The famine that struck Bangladesh kept the government busy though most were beginning to feel that AL would never hand over power nor go the democratic way.

The passing of the Special Powers Bill in 1974 was symptomatic of what was to come later. The general direction of the political situation was becoming increasingly despair-ridden. The requirement to have legal sanctions which didn't need to be just and fair revealed that the party in power was no longer riding the steed of popularity and didn't bother to.

Holiday appealed for resistance. (Special Powers Bill; Resistance must come, Feb 3, 1974), but the opposition didn't come from the Left which EK followed but from the JSD, the radical splinter of the Awami League itself. Perhaps being left without much choice, EK gave coverage and support to this new Left. (Successful hartal; Government resorts to coercion; United movement needed. Feb 10, 1974) EK felt that the government was feeling the heat of popular protest. The very fact that it tolerated two hartals in quick succession meant it was forced to adjust its coercive machineries, said the paper. Within the context of Marxism also the objective conditions were beginning to ripen, it seemed.

But in some 'ways the inability of the' Awami League government to handle growing resentment and discontent pushed it into situations and actions which further drove the nail into its administrative coffin through its slip into totalitarianism. The army was called out in 1974 for the third time since independence and it seemed very ominous for the future of the civilian political party. In 'Why the armed forces have been called out' (28th April 1974) EK argued that the reasons behind the entry of the armed forces to fulfill tasks usually handled by the law enforcing agencies of a civilian government are basically an abdication of power. He went on to argue that under such circumstances the contradictions that arise between constitutional and emergency rule are intense and they can't be resolved but can create new power combines and combinations. It honestly spelled out the price of having the army do the civilian's job. 'This compromise can't last for long'. It was another instance when EK read his history well.

The Awami League government applied all the salves they knew to the decomposing face of their beleaguered administration but the downhill race to collapse continued. 'How viable is Bangladesh' (Sept 1, 14) questioned one piece and then went on for a few

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instalments without really finding any meaningful answers. There was no shortage of stamina but the factors which could inspire optimism were not in abundant supply. The emergency didn't improve the chances of it being lifted soon and the answer to the crisis was the dreaded move towards one party rule. EK's old foe was again at the turnpike of history hurtling on with it such velocity of contradiction that it was about to nearly tear Bangladesh apart. And the poorly printed pages of Holiday played the angry and reluctant witness to it all till AL decided to put an end to the collection of evidence.

By the time 1975 rolled in, the situation had become very serious and grim for all concerned. The Awami League government was so beleaguered that it couldn't handle criticism of its administration and run it at the same time. So it decided the easy way out was by putting an end to party politics in Bangladesh by passing an amendment whereby in violation of the constitution passed by the party itself, one-party rule was established. This party subsequently called BKSAL was joined in by AL's pro-Soviet allies, the Communist Party of Bangladesh and National Awami Party (pro-CPB). It was the last ditch attempt by a party and government to hold on to power after it was not entitled to it through reasons of popularity.

The atmosphere was grave and criticism of the party in power was an absolute no-no. Unable to use the language and epithets freely, Holiday began to say things with some reserve. But it continued to tell the pro-Soviets off, blaming them for political tailing, a charge which was universal. In fact EK and Holiday almost institutionalised insulting CPB and NAP through its pages.

It was a bad time to be a journalist, much less an Editor. Enayetullah Khan wrote, 'Nothing possibly could be worse than what it is today. Only doom can beat it all. Hence optimism fights back in a pitch dark tunnel of an unrewarding politics that holds little light at the end of it. Or it may well be a blind tunnel with no way

to go. We are just in the middle of it singly, collectively, and as a nation.' (Unity in struggle. March 9, 1975).

In this almost dark piece no party is mentioned and no leaders named but the agony of trying to be a free man in BKSAL Bangladesh is convincingly conveyed.

The other articles which Enayetullah Khan wrote in Holiday in 1975 are significant for what they didn't say. Devoid of the racy political language and its outrage muzzled, it resembled the stifled anger of any chained press in the world. EK discussed the decline and possible death of the economy and, like it or not, the voice is not easily recognised. He berated the Bangladesh Bank and a host of other financial institutions and agents but that is hardly what he had set out to do. In some ways the day the weekly was banned under the Mujib regime, the paper and its Editor were relieved of the terrible burden of bringing out Holiday which was not like Holiday at all. Holiday was banned on May 13, and EK found himself behind bars. (He was released on July 17, 1975. Holiday resumed publication in November 1975 after the ban was withdrawn on August 25, 1975.)

While discussing the past and possibilities of Holiday, the Editor himself said that the success of Holiday in the Mujib era, when it was the virtual opposition, was partly a matter of default. There was no institution at that time which wanted to play that role and it was thus left to Holiday to do what was its call to destiny. Few publications are ever in such a position and even fewer can rise to the occasion. Holiday did and could, even though that period ended as the Editor went official and then joined the cabinet and finally forayed into diplomacy before his recent return home in 1989.

But what days they were when all of it was in full cry! More than 33 years old, it is now an institution in its own right but heyday will always be when the shadows were gigantic and Holiday under EK dared to fight back.

—AFSAN CHOWDHURY

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East wing maligned: The roots of discord

The lines are drawn. Political leaders of the two wings as well as the press to a large extent have clearly announced their stand on the Tashkent Declaration. It has also not stopped there. Unfortunate though it may be, the unavoidable has taken place and the two opposing viewpoints have prepared themselves for a long spell of bitterness. Public opinion in East Pakistan has been largely in favour of the Tashkent Declaration which has been opposed by a sizable section of the West Wing. But now some sections in West Pakistan have unleashed a bitter tirade against East Pakistan.

The Nawa-i-Waqt, in a fit of anger (and stupidity), has said that East Pakistan supports the Tashkent Declaration since the people here are directly under the sway of smugglers. It reasons that as the Tashkent Declaration means a lessening of the vigilance at the borders, it has been energetically supported by smugglers and the people of East Pakistan; who are supposedly guided by a band of smugglers in matters of defence and sovereignty.

Be it ignorance or senselessness of this Lahore daily, the rabble rousing is only a symptom of the basic fact that no issue, political or economic, can be viewed in the same light in East and West Pakistan. The diametrically opposite stands taken by the political leaders of the two wings over the Tashkent Declaration should testify to this.

East Pakistan Awami League General Secretary Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has clearly supported the Tashkent Declaration before his departure for the Lahore conference. This conference, if it does anything at all,

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will only cry itself hoarse for pulling down the Tashkent Declaration. A statement, circulated by a large number of West Pak leaders, makes this quite clear. Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, who came here only recently, is also stated to have said that there could not be any movement in West Pakistan except against the Tashkent Declaration.

The General Secretary of the East Wing branch of his own party is believed to have expressed the opinion before leaving for Lahore that if scrapping of the Tashkent Declaration was insisted upon, he and members of his delegation would walk out.

Mr. Nurul Amin has also issued a statement on behalf of the National Democratic Front, urging the sponsors of the Lahore Conference to uphold the Tashkent Declaration. But why such a great difference? The answer is simple. The two wings are geographically so much separated and so different that any given problem will present itself in different manners to the peoples of each wing and must, therefore, condition the response and the approach of the people of the two wings differently. Even in respect of questions like the sovereignty of the country and the fundamental rights of the people, there can hardly be unanimity. All the complicated problems that have arisen today begin with this simple conclusion—a conclusion based on the hard fact of geography. Those in West Pakistan who fail to understand why East Pakistan does not think of the Tashkent Declaration as a betrayal of the Kashmir issue equally fail to understand what total isolation of this wing during the war meant to people here. If they think East Pakistan did not suffer from the war, they just fail to understand what it cost East Pakistan to curtail its annual development budget. If they think that East Pakistan only looks at itself, they also do not understand what disparity means to East Pakistan, what Farakka is likely to cost this wing, and what it takes to rehabilitate millions of uprooted evictees

and refugees. As a matter of fact, the Tashkent Declaration has acted as a catalytic agent and has brought the question of understanding to the fore. It is now time to find an answer to this question.

The answer, to some extent, has been provided in the statements of both Mr. Nurul Amin and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Two things mentioned in these statements are essential: there should be complete regional autonomy under a parliamentary federal system of government and East Pakistan must be made confident that it has a self-sufficient defence system.

The federal government should deal with broader issues which affect the sovereignty of the nation but those matters which are directly related to the everyday life of the people must be left to the two wings themselves. Failing this, the chasm of misunderstanding is probably going to widen. The government in power has often failed to take into account the special requirements and the special problems of this wing—factors which should not only figure significantly in all policy decisions but must necessarily colour these decisions.

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Lahore Conference: The crack in the mirror

The opposition parties in the West and the East, excepting perhaps the NAP, have already lost the dialogue between them.

Now that the last throb of the opposition political parties has died down at Lahore, the combined opposition movement seems to have suddenly lost its sense of direction. The purpose also does not seem to remain the same as it was only recently when all the opposing parties joined together in the broad framework of 'democracy'.

The Tashkent Declaration, or precisely the far-reaching political implications embodied in it, seems to have finally ripped open the broad opposition unity and has confronted the opposition parties with the most disturbing but pertinent question of defining the terms of unity. Never before did the erstwhile COP look so hopeless and scattered, and the opposition parties find so limited a ground for agreement among them. The opposition parties in the West and the East, excepting perhaps the NAP, have already lost the dialogue between them. The disparaging comment in the Nawa-i-Waqt raised a storm of protest in East Pakistan but this was the only major opposition newspaper in west wing which had supported the COP and Awami League.

It is quite significant that the Tashkent Declaration has generated an under-current of antagonism between the opposition parties in East Pakistan. Awami League, NAP and NDF no longer find themselves as near as before. An indirect but harsh dialogue has ensued between two Bengali newspapers supposedly representing Awami League and the Moscow-oriented section in NAP. The NDF had also a

share of the criticism from the Awami League sources for their non-participation in the Lahore conference. There has been implied criticism of Sk. Mujibur Rahman's 'sweeping demand' in the NDF organ recently.

Escalation of Soviet influence in the politics of the subcontinent, achieved through Tashkent, seems to be one of the main reasons for the flux in the opposition camp. The contradiction of the present regime in Pakistan with the imperialists had drawn it towards the Afro-Asian and socialist bloc countries. Its participation in the 'peaceful' Soviet efforts at Tashkent may have gone to change the attitude of a section of the opposition. The Tashkent Declaration has been instrumental in assorting the opposition parties into various camps.

The shortcomings and limitations of a so-called broad but unprincipled democratic front have come to light in the wake of Tashkent. Opposition for the sake of power only may no longer hold all the parties together.

The people in this country have started to realise that the so-called democratic movement may not find a solution to their problems. The unrealistic bid is to achieve miraculous political ends overnight without creating the sufficient and necessary political organisation for achieving and sustaining the political gains. If the history of the political movements in the past 18 years is properly analysed, it will be seen that the people have jumped from one peak to another only to come down to the abysmal depth of failure and frustration. The remarkable victory of the people of East Pakistan in 1954 against the reactionary Muslim League regime was totally negated by the internecine quarrel long before Martial Law could strike.

The people of Pakistan are realising from their painful experience that the replacement of the regime by a seemingly parliamentary, formally democratic government will not help them solve the problems facing

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their country. In the present conditions, something more is needed than putting forward the vague non-committal slogan of the return to parliamentary government which camouflages the hope of returning to power cherished by the different sections of the ruling classes.

If this painful experience results in forging an anti-imperialist democratic front with genuine socialistic programmes, the opposition movement in the country may yet get a real meaning and the support of the people.

Mujib's 6-point: Platform or diving board?

The demarcating lines between the various political parties in power and opposition having become hazy, overlapping and at places deep to the extent of being unerasable, the political situation in Pakistan seems to have jumbled up again. While over the Tashkent Declaration the National Awami Party, the National Democratic Front and a section of the Awami League have arrayed themselves with the regime against the Jama'at, Nizam-e-Islam, Council of Muslim League and the other section of Awami League, with regard to Sk. Mujib's six-point programme, the dissenters from Tashkent have been vigorously reinforcing the government spokesman's criticism against it. On the other hand, Awami League and NAP, the only two plausible and possible partners in the struggle for democracy, are at daggers drawn over the question of foreign policy. The National Awami Party has recently been criticised as the 'foreign policy oriented party in the Awami League organ while the general secretary of the NAP has refused to take Sk. Mujib's stance seriously' because of his 'somersault' over the Lahore conference. He also described Awami League as a party supporting the Western powers. And when the Ayub government has found the NAP as the most helpful supporter with regard to the new trends in its foreign policy, hundreds of political workers belonging to NAP are rotting in its jails.

However, with his usual bravado, Sk. Mujibur Rahman has thrown a 'six-point' programme on the board as the chief champion of the cause of the people of East Pakistan. Minus the sound and fury he has added to the programme, these points in the main have always

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been the kernel of the demand of East Pakistan, but in the present context these 'six-points' cannot by themselves be sufficient for removing the sufferings of the common people. But the East Pakistan Awami League secretary general did not get down to brass tacks. For example, his 'six-points' envisage, at their best, constitutional and administrative measures towards making East and West Pakistan self-sufficient but remain grossly silent as to what this 'self-sufficiency' would mean in concrete economic and political terms for the common people of East Pakistan. Supposing that these six points have been realised, is there any guarantee that vested interests under a different garb will not again strangle the economic and political life of the people of East Pakistan? A changed taxation authority or a new currency only cannot provide the answer to the manifold sufferings of the people. There is not the minimum hint in these points whether radical reforms will be undertaken to free the people from century-long deprivation. Sk. Mujib's 'six-points' are grossly wanting in these finer but indispensable details without which regional autonomy has no complete meaning for the common people.

What emerges from this analysis is that any political party which looks forward to freeing the common people from all sorts of economic and political exploitation will have to march ahead with specific programme for the people. The commitment to the people has to be forthright and unambiguous.

Political scene: The chorus of confusion

Dhaka seems to have been caught up in a whirlpool of political activities. The National Assembly begins its spring session tomorrow. The President arrives in the evening the same day. Agitation in the university goes on unabated and political parleys, reminiscent of bygone days, are taking place everyday off and on the streets.

To expect too much of the NA session may turn out to be puerile optimism. To attach serious political significance to the President's visit may as well turn out to be sheer kite-flying. To foresee successful consummation of unprincipled communion between leaders of different shades may still be a bad prophecy. Yet, the fact remains: Dhaka is warming up to generate enough heat in days to come. But where this heat will lead to is anybody's guess. It appears that a choir of merry confusion, minus the high-pitched tenor of student agitation, has taken hold of the political dais. While a handful are dancing to the tune of obscured enchantment, others present a mass of baffled audience to the chorus of confusion.

Nevertheless, one or two serious issues of great political significance have come to the surface in recent times. And the National Assembly session is likely to echo at least the faint strains of these demands. These are the demands for the withdrawal of emergency and meaningful regional autonomy. The NAP has already given call for the withdrawal of emergency. The Awami League in East Pakistan, in spite of its open rift with its central party chief on Tashkent and possibly on the issue of autonomy, has clearly spelled out what it means by regional autonomy in terms of political science.

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While agreement on the former demand seems to be universal in East Pakistan, opinion on the second seems to be divided, though not in principle but in some other respect. The latter demand has dragged in the psychological concept of motivation on the part of EPAL's fire-brand leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. An opinion poll is certain to reveal that there is a very strong popular agreement on the demand for regional autonomy. But it is also certain to bring to the fore a more demanding question as to how this regional autonomy in clear economic, social and political terms is going to benefit the masses of the country.

How can popular support from West Pakistan be enlisted for this demand unless the promoters of such a slogan reciprocate to the demands of undoing One Unit—the cry of the people of the former lesser provinces of West Pakistan minus, of course, the Punjab? The EPAL chief miserably failed to clarify these points. Confident of the success of slogan mongering, he failed to take note of these vital questions. He also made himself quite funny when he mixed up his demand for separate currency, as envisaged in his six points, with economic programme in a press conference held recently by him in Dhaka. But in spite of his failings and the failings of their late-lamented leader during the latter's tenure of premiership in respect of regional autonomy (don't we remember the sermon that East Pakistan has attained 98% of autonomy during his blessed regime?), the demand is very much alive and no less important than any other problem facing the present regime. But how these demands could find a proper vent in the National Assembly is a big question. The opposition in the National Assembly has fortunately formed itself into a clan separated from 'outsiders' in the political arena. Their bonds with the political parties being too thin, the demands may at most be raised superficially on the floor of the House. And why should one forget the National Democratic Front which unfortunately has more

roots in the National Assembly than among the masses? While a section of them is constantly on the lookout to get into the domain of power with Mr. Nurul Amin as its spearhead, the other finds itself in the lurch in the actual field of operation—that is among the masses. Isolated as these leaders are, they are even trying to find a sympathiser in Chowdhury Mohammad Ali whose role vis a vis East Pakistan has never been and will never be beyond doubts. It is also interesting to note that East Pakistan has also been chosen as the market by people like Chowdhury Mohammad Ali and Maulana Maudoodi for selling their political merchandise under the label of democracy or Islamic Socialism.

To revert, the attitude of the treasury bench to these demands of regional autonomy, withdrawal of emergency, etc. seems to be uncertain. As a matter of fact, it will be difficult for the government to brush aside these issues. The government role in certain spheres of national policy—foreign policy, for example—did show a genuine awareness of popular mood in the past. Yet, the contradictions within the government always restrained it from taking wholesome actions and democratic posture with regard to national politics. It has given the cartels a fresh boom in spite of its anti-cartel talks; it has kept political workers behind bars in spite of changing circumstances.

The contradictions are evident everywhere. The National Assembly session will only give the people a piece of the government's confused mind. Whether it can rise above the contradictions and confusion will be seen more clearly during the session.

They are even trying to find a sympathiser in Chowdhury Mohammad Ali whose role vis a vis East Pakistan has never been and will never be beyond doubts.

The six-point programme: Surprised by joy

The demand for regional autonomy is as old as the Pakistan movement itself.

Thanks to some wild statements by top Convention Muslim League leaders, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has reaped a very quick and rich harvest out of his no-failure six-point political seedling.

It has worked almost like a magic formula and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman overnight finds himself riding on the crest of a renewed popular upsurge which the country's rulers may find difficult to contain, even by applying the 'language of weapons', whatever that might mean.

If the remainder of the divided opposition was late in catching up with Sheikh Mujib, they are at the moment in the midst of a frantic 'movement' to tell the people that they actually have only minor differences with the Awami leaders.

Even those who were virtually preparing themselves to accept a negotiated truce with the ruling party are now loudly crying war. And it is no wonder that, though late, they have come to realise the magic potency of the sure-fire demand for 'regional autonomy'.

For one thing, the demand for regional autonomy is as old as the Pakistan movement itself. And like Yarrow unvisited, it has remained a dream even after 18 years of independence.

Whenever political parties have run short of slogans, they have fallen back on this one demand; and the fairy godmother of popular support has turned the pumpkins of political parties into stately carriages. The inevitable next stage was a quick ascendancy to the throne.

When Awami League refused to sign the 1956 Constitution, it was because 'that unworthy document had not given adequate guarantee of regional autonomy'. When the late Mr. Shaheed Suhrawardy tried to sell it to the country, during his prime ministership, it was because 'this constitution' has given 'you 98% provincial autonomy'.

It is in this backdrop of opportunism in politics that the six-point programme has given rise to the lurking suspicion about the real intention of its enunciators. This, however, is not the only point. Stressing as it does the import of emotional demands, the six-point programme seems to have left some of the vital issues (may be deliberately) out of its orbit.

In his explanation of the six points, Mr. Mujibur Rahman very correctly pointed to the economic reasons which had driven him to prescribe such radical measures as the six points, which for all intents and purposes, they are. And it should surprise no one that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman should consider this political medicine adequate to treat an unmistakable economic malaise.

The silence of the six-point programme on the guarantees of economic emancipation of the 'people' is no mystery. For, the economic programme that Sheikh Mujib or Awami League has would hardly enthuse the people in the way its political programme would.

When in his recent press conference Shiekh Shahib was confronted with a question on the issue, his reply was an admirably clever political statement but went nowhere near answering the vital question. He said that the six-point programme could be the political plank for anyone, be he a rightist or a leftist.

The 18 years of Pakistan hardly confirms Sheikh Shahib's optimism about the inviolability of a purely political system, independent of economic pressure. The 1935 Constitution which we inherited, it is maintained, included provisions which guaranteed provincial autonomy in a much more effective manner than the

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The political power silently passed first into the hands of bureaucrats and finally and inevitably into the hands of the industrial tycoons.

Constitution adopted thereafter. But in practice, it saw a titular post accumulating all powers and a federation degenerating into a medieval kingdom where vassal kings were autonomous as long as the emperor wished so.

The reason was obvious. The political power silently passed first into the hands of bureaucrats and finally and inevitably into the hands of the industrial tycoons. And even Sheikh Mujibur Rahman knows that.

In his explanation of six points, he has taken all the pains to assert that 'it was not against the people of West Pakistan that we are waging battle, it was against a vested interest that has equally exploited them'. The inevitable, if not the only logical question, is what does Mujibur Rahman propose to do to check, if not stem, the growth of any such vested interest in a regionally autonomous East Pakistan?

On the face of it, the six-point programme may be, without underestimating its political implications, a magna carta for those who 'could be industrial tycoons of East Pakistan origin.' Why talk of people then?

Mr. Bhutto's next: Farewell to sunshine

Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's most talked-about cabinet minister in charge of foreign affairs, has been obliged to take leave of office for what has been euphemistically described as medical treatment. In a statement issued on Saturday afternoon, President Ayub himself announced his concurrence to Mr. Bhutto's proceeding on leave, thereby putting an end to the spate of rumours which has been swelling and receding seasonally since September last year. The President further announced that he, for the time being, would look after the portfolio of foreign affairs.

Lest anyone mistake medical treatment for its genuine connotation, Mr. Bhutto has finally bowed out of power after years of bitter in-fighting with men who matter in the Washington lobby. His departure incidentally coincides with the resumption of American aid so diligently pursued and finally obtained by Mr. M. Shoaib. Hence despite reassurances from political quarters, the belief persists that Bhutto has been conveniently bartered away for dollars. It has been open knowledge for a fairly long long time now that the Americans were far from pleased with Mr. Bhutto, obviously for his forthright stand on China, and was demanding his scalp in return for resuming economic aid.

Be that as it may, the President in his statement discounted suggestions made in certain quarters that with the departure of Mr. Bhutto, there would be no change in the foreign policy. He said, 'I should like to make it clear that there need be no such apprehensions.'

Nevertheless, the apprehensions are very much there. One, however, does not know whether the

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departure of Mr. Bhutto from the present state-machinery is indicative of his journey into oblivion for all time to come. With all his contradictions, Mr. Bhutto ultimately turned out to be a political force (maybe without any definite mooring) which gave a new shape and meaning to the run-of-the-mill affair that our politics was so far. The new trend in the foreign policy with all its traits of expediency came to the surface in 1960. But it was Bhutto who sharpened it with his honest convictions and made it a working policy.

To revert, the political force which Bhutto himself has generated in and around him is not likely to die out just like that. It is quite possible that the nucleus which he has nourished, knowingly or unknowingly, will invoke his return to politics today or tomorrow.

The departure of Mr. M. Shoaib is also likely to follow shortly. One may as well draw a parallel with the Krishna Menon and Desai affair in the Indian cabinet in 1962. The right and the left both had to be conceded to by Nehru whose two faces were causing him enough trouble in his later days.

It may be mentioned here that the domestic benefits which accrued to President Ayub's government in recent times for its anti-imperialist stance may not be there anymore after Bhutto leaves the cabinet. For, people will take the news with misgivings, notwithstanding the assurance from President Ayub that Pakistan's foreign policy will run its usual course.

Promise of thunder

In the ever-shifting kaleidoscope of our national politics, no given spectrum remains constant for more than a brief period. What today looks like a set pattern may tomorrow turn out to be no more than a mirage. The winds of change blow so swiftly across the corridors of power that heroes and villains are effaced and re-formed continually. New and incredible alliances bloom overnight and old friendships go by the board in a matter of moments.

Thus the myth of much professed stability seems a wonder as a sudden flux corrodes the propped up foundations of a stable regime. The crop of rumours which seems to rule Pakistan's politics at the moment is a measure of the political state we are in; and despite the President calling them wild fantasies, there seems to be no end to this spate. The political climate is electric with strange whispers.

Notwithstanding the psychology of this mythmaking, the fact remains that the present political alignment is due for an as-yet undefined shift on which wild talks are feeding for the present. The primary determinant, however, is unalloyed administrative control for the present set-up which may even condescend to certain adjustments in the distribution of power without, however, any political concession.

The last cabinet meeting deserved attention in this respect. Usually well-informed sources are inclined to believe that propositions for sharing of power with the present set-up are being dished out to certain groups in the Opposition. And strangely enough, one of these groups happens to be Awami League. It is no longer a secret that a 'cabinet mission' carrying the decision of the last cabinet meeting flew into East Pakistan quite

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Rival groups have already made their presence known and are reported to be preparing for a decisive showdown in the very immediate future.

unexpectedly under the innocuous cover of 'official tour' and met the Awami League President Sheikh Mujib in his Central Jail sanctuary to sound him out on this lucrative offer. But, as mentioned earlier, the mission made no bones about the administration's apathy to a political settlement. Naturally the negotiations fell through on the conditions that had been laid out or for the extraordinary circumstances in which the Awami League had placed itself by its actions on six-points.

The government is known to be trying its luck on another front with certain individual "Ebdonians" who were obliged to keep their mouths shut for years. Prominent among them are Mian Mumtaz Daulatana in the west and a press magnate in the east. But the bargainings and the behind-the-scene manoeuvres will probably take a leisurely course and the outcome may not be known before December, when the present political moratorium expires.

Events of sharper impact and urgency are likely to take place in the coming four weeks when new personalities will make their appearance on the political and administrative scene. While the immediate mission of consolidating positions in the present set-up goes on, rival groups have already made their presence known and are reported to be preparing for a decisive showdown in the very immediate future. It is to thwart the possible thrust from these challengers that those already ensconced are hurriedly fortifying their battlements. In a squeeze play where no quarter is given and none asked for, little has been left to chance. The weak links have all been shed and a closing of ranks effected. The Ides of July may see more than monsoon clouds; thunder and lightning of an altogether different nature may streak the political horizon.

Opposition Strategy: Stairway To The Stars

Leaving a trail of speculations, and traffic jams, President Ayub Khan took off from Dhaka for his seat at Rawalpindi last Friday.

On the day he reached Dhaka, he made a fairly tough speech; and students of some of the institutions here went on a pre-planned strike to demonstrate that they might be down but not out.

Just before the President's departure, the acting General Secretary of the Awami League, Mrs Amena Begum, issued a statement accusing the President of making provocative comments about East Pakistani politicians. And sure enough on his arrival at the Lahore airport, President Ayub made some stinging comments about his political opponents in East Pakistan. The intervening period of five days of his tour was mostly devoted to making integration speeches.

While all these are matters of record, things which took place beyond the public eye are said to be quite ear-filling. According to circles close to the Convention League, their boss himself had thrown a pail of cold water on his enthusiastic followers. In reply to a question, asked at a meeting of Conventionist MNAs and MPAs about the possibility of politicians being taken into the government on the expiry of EBDO, the Convention League boss is stated to have said that his door was open to all. He is also stated to have said that the present enrolment and integration campaign of the Convention League was the last chance for the survival of the party. This has led to speculations in the rank and file of the Convention League that their boss has found out what the party was really worth, and that by now weary of

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going it alone, he was seriously looking for help from the old hands in the game of politics.

This was lent some credence by the usual quota of speculations about negotiations, political or otherwise, between opposition stalwarts and President Ayub Khan or his emissaries. By now it is more or less a fact that some of the elder politicians are ready to strike a bargain with the ruling regime. What they want is a more convincing facade of democracy or liberalisation. They are yet to strike the right chord. But this time a group among them is said to have expressed their eagerness for settling for something just face-saving. They of course want the sun to shine on them in exchange. As a matter of fact some people in the opposition are afraid of an impending gold-rush.

Meanwhile, the normal and usual wire-pulling inside the Convention League is going on unabated, if not with great vigour.

The jackpot this time is said to be the highest post in the province.

So, once again all that we had during last week was liberal helpings of intrigue-politics with a dash of student demonstrations and some statements. As for political activities at the people's level, the slumber is all too perceptible.

East Wing Opposition: Mirage Of Unity

There are cries from the housetops for unity among the opposition political parties. But unity still remains a far cry for its prophets.

This week the divergent political parties have struck out on their own. This is somewhat curious in view of the fact that there was a declaration after the unfinished unity conference at Mr. Nurul Amin's residence that there would be yet another meeting to complete the business.

While not much of an effort was made by the top leaders, some persons, who have made their entry into politics recently and are still sort of non-aligned, made definite attempts to bring about a meeting of minds. Their story has ended in heart-break. One such person confided, "There does not seem to be anybody really interested in unity, at least not at the moment."

As if to prove this point, the NDF drew up a tour programme of their own (ironically, they are the advocates of suspending individual party activities for obtaining that cherished goal of theirs-unity). The Council Muslim League also followed suit. The NAP has held a meeting at Chittagong. And the Awami League, insisting on its 'go it alone' policy, launched what is called the second phase of their six-point programme.

But the more important point is, what happened in Dhaka? The government did not accord permission to the Awami Leaguers to use microphones for their proposed meeting at Paltan Maidan. The Stadium Committee refused them the Paltan Maidan itself. And not a single voice, except that of Awami League, was raised against this violation of the right of freedom of

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expression. And although the Acting General Secretary of the Awami League issued a statement protesting this violation, no other action from the Awami League side was taken. There was not even any attempt to hold streetcorner meetings. People just did not seem to care much about what was going on.

If the government watched these proceedings with any amount of pleasure, they could not be as gleeful about the success of their so-called Integration Day observances. They timed it so that the Integration Day coincided with the Independence Day.

They hoped to draw the Independence Day crowds to their own programmes. But the attendance at the meetings was disappointing compared to the ingenuity of the move. The government machinery, particularly radio and television, swung into action to carry the Integration Day message, but the bland arguments fell flat.

The sum-total, therefore, is a vacuum; a vacuum the kind of which the country has never experienced. It now seems that the policy of corroding away the political consciousness of the people is now catching up with the government party itself. That even questions like "secession or integration" fail to rouse the interest of the people should be a lesson to be read well by all concerned. Sapping away of the political vitality of the people is bound to make it into a horse which will not be moved either by the carrot or the whip.

Meanwhile, the word in the moribund opposition camp is this that it may look up a little when the EBDO* goes come December. One only hopes it is not a pious wish. But then the word is there too that when the offstage politicians make their re-entry, the political question will be a readjustment of the present constitutional set-up and not its recasting in the mould of unalloyed democracy.

**(EBDO, Electoral Bodies' Disability Ordinance, debars a number of politicians to take part in elections.)*

East Wing Scene

Frame Of Disillusion

There is bad news all over, that is, for us who live in East Pakistan. Natural calamities seem to have become a permanent fixture. Flood has hit the province for the second time this year. Thirteen of the province's 17 districts are affected.

Up to the present count, nearly seven thousand homesteads have been washed away. Rice crop to the extent of 60 per cent is lost in the affected areas. One crore of the populace are directly hit. Of them 10 thousand have taken shelter in what is called relief camps in the city. They come from the suburbs. Though not many lives have been lost, two babies fell from their beds into the water inside their houses and were drowned.

There seems to be no let up of this grim situation. Even while the Governor flew over flood-affected areas and got the impression that the situation was improving and stating that to the people of one locality, messages poured in of fresh areas being submerged.

There does not seem to be any relenting of high food prices either. Despite the government's endeavour to keep up food supply through modified rationing, the prices would not simply come down. At places rice is still selling at the rate of Rs. 1.25 per seer or Rs. 50 per maund. Now the floods washing away the aman seedlings from the flood-affected areas have made the hope of prices coming down even more remote. The flood has also called for free supply of foodgrains to the affected people. Despite the free wheat-aid given by the U.S.A., this has added to the pressure on the government food-stock.

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As if this was not sufficient, the government has been obliged to cut down 10 per cent from its Rs. 230 crore annual development budget. There may be still further cuts. The cut in the Rs. 20 crore budget in the works programme may be sizeable indeed. Thus what had come to replace test relief in a way will be minimised to a great extent.

And what is going to happen to the economy? After last year's drastic cut in the provincial development budget, the Finance Minister had announced that the growth rate of a little more than five per cent attained during the second five-year plan has been maintained. What now? And, there is going to be a definite slump in the gross national product in so far as this province is concerned. The 1965-66 economic survey of East Pakistan had vividly shown that the rise and fall in the GNP is very dependent on the rice production in this wing. Floods have hit out at this base disastrously. Even if there is a rally for recovery, the results would come late. The farmers are going to have to begin from the beginning again. Meanwhile the State Bank governor Mr. Hasnie has revealed disconcerting facts about the economy. And that too in Dhaka. While he has hit out at the economic policies pursued by the government so long, the most distressing news that he delivered was that inflationary pressures have increased immensely. He has also pointed out that sitting comfortably under the protective umbrella of the government, the manufacturers in the country have attained a position from where they can now manipulated prices in the market and that the consumers were actually paying higher prices everyday.

Mr. Hasnie has also renewed a warning-a warning that circumstances had already brought home to many by now-that the country will have to increase its food production, that the sources of foodgrain abroad are fast drying up and that shortly in the future we might be asked to pay for the food in foreign currency.

The report of the experts committee on 'attaining self-sufficiency in food production in East Pakistan in minimum possible time' was heartening in this respect. Concrete measures were suggested in the report. But the question is still money. Though the report did not go into the financial implications of the suggestions made, it did say that an assessment made by the agriculture directorate that Rs. 68 crores would be needed in addition to the same amount that has been allocated to the agriculture sector in the province in the third plan.

There is, however, no indication as yet whether the money would be available. Meanwhile, the annual development programmes of the agriculture sector have not been excluded from the 10 per cent cut. So?

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A Charter For Change

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After a hectic spell of rash activities, the political theatre in East Pakistan is deserted now. But perhaps the stage is being set for the next, though different, act in the unending political drama. A frustrated Awami League and a fatigued Establishment are both looking for ways and means to end this deadlock. It may be too early to forecast a rapprochement between the protagonists of the 'Six Points' and the Establishment, but possibilities are certainly being explored to find out avenues of cooperation. Stability, and a political frame of reference in which this stability can be preserved, have turned out to be of supreme importance to those who are at the helm of the country at present. The response that the slogans for democracy and autonomy evokes among the masses has focussed at least this point that the sharing of power with the spokesman of the rising classes is now almost unavoidable. The post-martial law cooperation between the dominant sections of the people of East Pakistan has collapsed; the need for a new partnership has become most evident. And no doubt, the Awami League, by virtue of its Six Point movement, has earned the right to participate in the power game. There must also be pressures from within and without for an understanding with the Awami League which in the final analysis does not pose a threat to total power but only to a fringe of it.

This consideration may appear hypothetical. But knowledgeable sources claim that negotiations are underway for a 'settlement' between the Establishment and the Awami League leaders. A

highly placed journalist from West Pakistan, who is reputed to have a big say in high-power politics, flew into Dhaka recently to meet the chief spokesman of the Awami League now behind bars. It is not known what transpired between them but on return he fully exonerated the editor-politician from any active complicity in the Six Points and also acquitted the Six Points of the charge of being alien-inspired. Forgive and forget was the burden of his suggestions, made boldly public through pro-Establishment newspapers.

It appears that the Establishment may be trying to give the dog a good name before setting it free.

It cannot now be ascertained on what terms the warring parties will settle the affair. But the Awami League does not appear to have much choice in the matter other than signing a 'good conduct' document in exchange for a promise of rehabilitation.

It appears that the Establishment may be trying to give the dog a good name before setting it free.

East Wing Scene The Long Grind Ahead

There was trouble in a local school over some controversial writings of the headmaster on Tagore.

There just does not seem to be any end to it all—this inertia, this frustration, this vacuum.

Food prices are touching new highs. The government has been simply unable to bring them down. They say, “we are supplying foodgrains, we are keeping our commitments.” Reports, however, continue to pour in that people are being compelled to buy rice at the minimum price of Rs. 1.25 per seer. A huge portion of the populace is yet to be covered by rationing. So, take the grind.

Floods are there. Of course floods are a normal part of our life, at least now. We have accepted it. The governor himself says nine thousand square miles of the fifty-four thousand square miles of this province are submerged every year by what is called normal floods. It is true. People just live on the edge. If the waters engulf any more area than this, it spells disaster. There is just nothing to stop it.

There seems to be no end to the closure of educational institutions; at the moment the Polytechnic Institute is closed. It was closed sine die when students went on strike. The government thinks the closing of educational institutions is the best medicine for all the troubles. At least they think it is a preventive. No classes, no strike. Curatives? Who bothers! Even the private institutions are following this. There was trouble in a local school over some controversial writings of the headmaster on Tagore. Students threatened to strike. The institution was closed. This, however, should not give the idea that there is a lot of stir in the cultural life. If there is any activity, it is limited

to the staging of incomprehensible sob-stuff or incredibly stupid thrillers.

The other day the governor said, why should the students shout 'release political prisoners', what have they got to do with political prisoners. A newsman replied, 'Why should not they? After all the political prisoners are their kith and kin.' But these shouts are fading out even where the political parties are concerned. Repression and intrigue have deeply corroded the zeal and enthusiasm of the parties. Only the hard core of political workers are clinging on. But at the moment they are rather an ineffective group.

The articulate Dhaka press is also becoming morbid. There are only occasional flashes. Even more dangerous is the dampening of the spirit. Only a few years ago, when the government tried to curtail their freedom, they spat fire. The government had to beat a hasty retreat. This time when as many as five newspapers, including the most influential daily of the province, were closed down by government decrees, the journalists chose to negotiate. They thought they were doing the correct thing. But somehow or other they were duped. Now, after taking a beating for quite some time, they are again readying themselves for direct action. Meanwhile, the out-of-job journalists are bitterly feeling the crunch.

As many as five newspapers, including the most influential daily of the province, were closed down by government decrees.

The Trifling Columbus

The celebrated editor wails over the lack of ideological cohesion among East Pakistani youth and diagnoses 'mental dyspepsia' among the literate East Pakistanis.

The reportage on East Pakistan by the Editor of Urdu Digest, Lahore, is a lamentable example of puerile journalism. Equally lamentable is the wisdom of the Coordination Branch of the Press Information Department which took great pains to cyclostyle the same and circulate it to all newspapers as a Special Article in the Background Information Series. The first instalment of the article entitled 'The River of Love is Flowing,' is replete with observations which do not even merit contradiction. One only wonders what motivated the PID other than the proverbial ignorance of the officials to publicise such trash as authoritative writing on East Pakistan's way of life, culture, tradition, political climate, customs and mores.

The celebrated editor wails over the lack of ideological cohesion among East Pakistani youth and diagnoses 'mental dyspepsia' among the literate East Pakistanis. He is shocked to see that those who crowd the Secretariat Gate to obtain an entry permit speak 'something in Bangla' and are not generally clad in suits. He conjures up a vision of dhoti-clad infiltrators into the Secretariat building. He claims to have been told by an East Pakistani Doctor (in Economics) that family planning is an American conspiracy against the Afro-Asian people.

These are the samplings of what has been described by the PID as 'important observations'. His sociological probe is still more amusing. He finds that in the evenings women in Dhaka do not stroll on the foot-paths as they do in other cities. The credit for keeping Dhaka life free from evils, he observes, usually found in big cities goes to the women here.

While the above can be ignored as the senseless babble of a psychotic, his dabbling with the religious sentiments of East Pakistanis should earn him and also his propagator, the PID, a covetable space in Holiday. Hence this expose'. The gentlemen editor feels that the new generation in East Pakistan is to a large extent unaware of the ideology of Pakistan and that people are sentimentally attached to Islam. To quote some excerpts:

'There are 600 mosques in Dhaka city alone. The number of worshippers in these mosques is certainly greater than the number of those in Lahore. People generally recite the Holy Quran daily. Milad Mahfils are also held frequentlyBut unfortunately it seems that this love for Islam is confined to the celebrations of a few occasions... People in East Pakistan do not seem to realise that Islam is not only a religion but also a code of life and a philosophy of living.'

The Urdu Digest editor goes on dilating on the subject and turns his axe on the newspapers. He says: 'Unfortunately the role played by the newspapers is not a very happy one. During my 12-day stay there, I did not even see the word Islam appear in the majority of newspapers. On the other hand, I came across editorials and news items designed to present Islam in a wrong manner. In the Morning News, articles are published on Islamic history and Islamic personalities, but the rest of the columns contain materials which practically annul the effect of those articles.' If Morning News fails to get a clean bill of health from this great savant, one can well imagine the lot of other newspapers.

The rest of the report is a childish attempt at scanning the political scene, providing inaccurate intelligence on political parties. But his sympathy for Jammaat-e-Islami, though tempered with caution, strikes one as rather unusual in the entire despatch. May be he found a compatriot in the coordination Branch of PID who wittingly or unwittingly performed the publicity job for the All-Pakistan Jamaat.

If Morning News fails to get a clean bill of health from this great savant, one can well imagine the lot of other newspapers.

People and Parties: The Widening Gap

The mis-adventure of the protagonists of 'six points' has had a deep, frustrating effect on the overall political movement in East Pakistan.

While the people of East Pakistan have been ravaged by the floods and haunted by food crisis, the opposition parties have maintained a conspicuously indifferent attitude to their problems and sufferings. Their response to the sufferings of the people did not go beyond the passing of resolutions, circulation of press statements and at best staging the apology of a 'Day'. Political observers say that this silence has at least something to do with the general belief that an era of 'political adjustment' with the Establishment is right in the offing. The EBDONIANS* are reportedly marking their time in the wings with carefully maintained clean records, to be taken into the bandwagon of power.

Their hope has been reinforced by the gubernatorial change in West Pakistan.

The mis-adventure of the protagonists of 'six points' has had a deep, frustrating effect on the overall political movement in East Pakistan. The move for a joint struggle hit the rock as usual on the question of democracy and adult franchise! It is reported that a certain political front in East Pakistan expressed the opinion that food and flood are only the temporary issues and the revival of democracy was the primary question of our time. So it would not be wise to divert the broad democratic struggle by indulging in such passing movements. A section inside the National Awami Party was reportedly opposed to observing

**(Those debarred from seeking elections under the EBDO, a Presidential promulgation.)*

the 'Famine Resistance Day' because this would create a movement parallel to that of the Awami League. This wasting of time in the labyrinth of polemics and definitions has today moved the political parties far away from the people.

There is no doubt that the opposition parties in East Pakistan have failed to play the minimum role worth their name in matters of projecting the sufferings and the grievances of the people. It is surprising that the opposition parties failed to pull themselves up even for relief work and other sorts of help to the distressed people.

A time is coming when the opposition leaders will discover that the magic of the slogan of democracy no longer works in East Pakistan. To a people rendered homeless by the flood and cyclone and haunted by the food crisis, generalised political slogans have no meaning.

It is surprising that the opposition parties failed to pull themselves up even for relief work

Ayub's visit: A Schedule Of Surprise?

This was a sharp departure from the recent trend of withholding permission to the Awami League for holding public meetings, at least in Dhaka.

President Ayub is coming to East Pakistan on Friday, presumably to visit the cyclone-affected areas and address a convention of Basic Democrats, now almost an annual feature. The announcement of the President's unscheduled visit has been rather sudden. Since this does not fall under the category of a routine administrative visit nor one of those ceremonial trips when arches adorn the roads, it should not be altogether an exercise in futility to conclude that this trip bears a certain political significance.

Chowdhury Ali Akbar, the Central Home Minister, was also here only the other day, ostensibly in connection with the National Economic Council meeting. But there were one or two inadvertent slips. For instance, he told a newsman here, in an aside, that he had come to survey the political situation in this wing. Again, on his return to Lahore he told newsmen that the political situation in East Pakistan was quite stable and the six-point movement was waning.

Interestingly, the Awami Leaguers were meanwhile permitted to hold a public meeting at Paltan Maidan last Sunday. This was a sharp departure from the recent trend of withholding permission to the Awami League for holding public meetings, at least in Dhaka. Irrespective of the decline attributed to the six-point movement, the meeting drew a large crowd.

These events were in themselves quite intriguing. Add to them the first perceptible note of discord in the harmonious Monem-Sabur duet. The Governor, while talking about cyclone damages, quite surprisingly failed to mention the losses in Khulna. The Communications

Minister, on the other hand, made a stunning statement about the damages in his home district. His estimates surpassed even those of the press.

Another trace was added to the political stigma by the sudden stand off of quarters that had so long displayed a fierce enthusiasm for a comfortable settlement with the ruling regime. Thus many of the incidents and occurrences that serve as weather-balloons for political meteorologists started behaving erratically during the last fortnight. This made the rather dull Dhaka rife with speculations and rumours. Among the many questions making the rounds in the guise of rumours were these: Was a change at the top imminent in the provincial administration? Is there a thaw in the relationship between the government and the Awami League aimed ultimately at an 'understanding'? Why has a certain section of the articulate opposition press suddenly become inarticulate? Is it because a plum is in the offing?

And, finally, will President Ayub's visit settle some of these questions or will he return as blandly as he is said to be coming?

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Growing Food Crisis: A Harvest Of Hazards

What guarantee is there that even the present plans will fructify since they are based more on faith and hope than on realities?

As the spectre of famine steadily grows larger, battle plans are belatedly being drawn up now by the administration to combat the grave risk of famine and starvation. With the current shortfall conservatively estimated at 2 million tons in terms of rice alone, there are anguished calls to launch and implement the administration's 'Grow More Food' campaign. How far this emergency plan will alleviate the present crisis is still a matter of fanciful conjecture. If past experience is any guide, hopes of success must be counted fairly thin. Is it not a sad reflection on the administration's competence that it should undertake a crash programme to reorientate the entire agricultural system in this wing eight years after the present regime came into power? And what guarantee is there that even the present plans will fructify since they are based more on faith and hope than on realities?

The Government, in its various announcements, proposes to attack the food problem in its widest perspective, that is, not by ad hoc measures aimed at relieving temporary shortages but a kind of overall master plan which would eliminate the food problem for all time. The three-pronged attack is aimed at :a) increasing crop yield by means of land reclamation, extensive use of fertilizers and 'three cropping'; (b) growing and distributing more cereals to ease the constant demand for rice; and (c) by effective family planning measures aimed at maintaining a healthy balance between total population and total food production. Undoubtedly, the measures proposed to be taken by the administration merit praise and show that there is full awareness of the

need for adopting comprehensive long-term objectives rather than going in for stop-gap arrangements. But it is extremely doubtful whether the intended measures will in reality be effectively implemented. To illustrate:

The Government proposes, during the current period (1966-67), to use fertilizers to the extent of 2,32,000 tons. It has, however, not been made clear in what manner these fertilizers are to be distributed. Obviously, the farmers can not be expected to pay for them since they lack cash, rural indebtedness today standing at the awesome figure of 96 crores. Probably, the fertilizers will be made available in the form of agricultural loans. But here again, it is not certain which agencies will be doing the actual distribution. There is, lamentably, no central and unified organisation to handle this kind of project. On the contrary, there is a wide variety of heterogenous organisations all seemingly entrusted with the task of improving agricultural production in the province. Secondly, since the fertilizers are meant to be financed by non-project funds, and fall outside the scope of development works, it is anomalous that these non-project allocations should have been reduced to only 2 crores against nearly double that figure in previous years. Would the reduced allocations be sufficient for distributing 2,32,000 tons of fertilisers?

Again, the Government's cherished scheme to establish model farms all over the province seems to contain many contradictions. While the scheme envisages model farms on all levels, from thanas to subdivisions, it is still a mystery how land for these farms is to be acquired. Except in the Sunderbans and Chittagong Hill Tracts, there is little land available for cultivation. Does the government propose to forcefully acquire land from the peasants, with all its attendant complications? Else, are cooperatives to be set up everywhere? If so, to what extent will the peasants participate in the running of these cooperatives? Such questions remain unanswered.

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There is further evidence of contradictions and short-comings in planning in the irrigation schemes. While it has been confidently announced that 5000 irrigation pumps are to be installed in the year 1966-67, there is evidence that this figure cannot possibly be reached as things stand today. As yet a total of 2,000 pumps have been acquired, 1,500 coming from the IDA. It is understood that the provincial government has written to the centre asking for an additional allocation of 1,000 pumps but no response has been forthcoming as yet.

Finally, the most important and crucial question has yet to be answered by the administration, namely, what steps have been taken to formulate and implement flood control schemes. There is no gainsaying that no effective and purposeful steps can be taken in this direction unless an overall flood control programme is drawn up with India's participation. Only a joint flood control programme can eliminate the perennial threat of floods which annually wash away not only crops but also the government's many pet projects of agricultural development. As the present year slowly draws to a close, it doesn't take much imagination to picture the threat of floods growing bigger with the passing of time. All government measures to improve the food situation stand to be submerged in the rushing fury of the mighty rivers. And, as yet, there are no signs that the administration has given serious thought to the matter of starting negotiation with India for a joint scheme. Perhaps the control of floods is not a subject 'meaningful' enough to warrant a meeting with India.

The Horizon Of Dreams

Despite the apparent lull in the political scene in the last week or two evidently brought about in view of the President's preoccupations and his forthcoming trip to Jordan and U.K., it would be incorrect to assume that behind-the-scene manoeuvrings have altogether ceased. On the contrary, the scene is seething with action, though mostly in the form of negotiations, proposals and counterproposals and discussions. With December drawing nearer, the opposition parties and their leaders are more actively involved now in charting out their future plans than before.

The immediate problem that they are desperately trying to overcome is the old and nagging one of unity. They have probably never before felt the absence of a unified platform as acutely as now. The whole question has assumed a note of urgency as the President, willing enough to discuss and perhaps even negotiate with the opposition, has consistently refused to hold piecemeal and fragmentary meetings with opposition leaders which, in his view, are a waste of time as a settlement with one particular party would not mean a settlement with the entire opposition. He has reiterated, it is believed, that he can negotiate with persons who represent a broad consensus of all the parties.

An indication of this was available recently when a special emissary from West Pakistan, representing at once Mian Daultana, Khuhro, Qayyum Khan and Gurmani, flew down to conduct a series of talks with Maulana Bhashani. It is believed that his specific mission was to work out the possibility of holding a meeting of all political parties including, and this is important, the Ebdonians. As stated above, the main objective is to forge a unified platform, incorporating the planks of all

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major parties which can speak to the President in a common voice. It is expected that if this proposal matures, it would enable the major opposition parties to whittle down their various heterogeneous demands to a few specific ones which could then be embodied in a common charter that would form the basis of the Opposition's negotiations with the regime.

However, it must be emphasised that this conjecture still remains on the periphery of hope as the differences among the parties are acute and deep. Most leaders are seized with individual dreams of power and the hope of making a separate peace with the regime. Again, family antagonism, class rivalry and old feuds still smoulder and prevent them from coming together in a joint venture for a common cause. There are some who would not like to participate in a conference which might include their family antagonists or their local or zonal rivals. This dilemma of the Opposition was further accentuated by the sharp dissent voiced by no less a person than Col. Abid Hussain.

Previous efforts to reconcile the differences and work out a joint programme have not so far seen fruition. Only a few months ago, Mr. Nurul Amin, Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, attempted to break the deadlock and convened a meeting of the party leaders of East Pakistan which was also attended by prominent Ebdonians. Unfortunately, his efforts at resolving the differences failed and the initiative soon fizzled out. However, it was not totally a waste as this failure has probably served to highlight the extreme importance and urgency of working out a compromise without delay. Many Opposition leaders feel that the coming days will demand a genuine spirit of accommodation and a willingness to sacrifice personal ambitions for the sake of a greater cause. Time is definitely running out for the Opposition, they feel, and a national concord of all major opposition parties is the foremost need today.

NEC reports on disparity: The wounds of neglect

The report of the National Economic Council on inter-regional disparities for the year 1966-67 submitted to the National Assembly on Monday last is a curious document. It is a proof that one cannot get away from realities.

There are discernible signs that the authors of the document laboured hard to present the picture of inter-regional disparities in as soft terms as possible and also to apportion responsibility of this national ailment to this province to quite some extent. But facts and circumstances inevitably caught up with them. If one is to be charitable to the authors of the document, one might put it in a slightly different form—they camouflaged the facts.

As far as intra-regional disparities are concerned, the document is absolutely silent. It would have been interesting to learn some facts in this respect, particularly at a time when the political structure of East Pakistan in relation to the one-unit has been radically changed as Punjab gets the preeminence in its to the legislature its representation to the legislatures on the basis of population.

To come back to inter-regional disparities. The report does not say that disparity between the provinces has widened further. It says rather that the increase in disparity in per capita income has slowed down to 2.8% per annum. Calculated at that rate, the differences in per capita income now reached 41% compared to 32% in 1962-63.

Stating broad reasons for the continued widening of the gap, the report says that it could be for: (1)

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inadequate implementation of development programmes, (2) the private sector in East Pakistan not having been enabled to respond to the challenge of economic growth and (3) progress in agriculture, which contributes about two-thirds to the regional income of East Pakistan, has lagged behind West Pakistan. Thus the blame is more or less placed on East Pakistan.

The report does not immediately try to answer how these factors developed. But then a closer reading of the report itself provides the answers. Table 1 of the report shows that during the Second Plan period by which time disparity was an established fact, development outlay in Pakistan averaged a bare 45% of the total development outlay in East Pakistan excluding the outside expenditures being incurred in West Pakistan. Also in the year 1956-66 the development outlay in East Pakistan was 44%.

The report attributes this reduced outlay to an emphasis on protection of ongoing schemes (most of which were in West Pakistan) following a national emergency. But what about earlier years? Is it also possible for a region which made a late start to absorb all the resources that were being placed at its disposal in recent years? Was the province getting all the funds that were being allocated to it on paper and secondly, were these funds made available in time? One can question the role of the central government in respect of implementation of the plans of correct dispersal of funds, as almost all development programmes were being approved by the National Economic Council. As a matter of fact, the supreme body acts as the watchdog over all developmental activities. Answers to such questions have not been supplied in the report.

Coming to the private sector, the report admitted that during the Third Plan East Pakistan has been able to utilise only 22% of its allocated share of private investment. The Third Plan booklet admits that during the Second Plan private sector investment exceeded that

plan's target by 27%. Why then this reversal of the trend? The report also admits that among the credit institutions, PICIC loans to this wing were sanctioned to the tune of only 22% of the total issue of this august organisation. The performance of IDPB was much better which had given 47% of its total issues to East Pakistan. The difference in credit issues by these two bodies can be a pertinent question. Despite persistent demands the PICIC did not consider the question of altering its stringent loan policies. What about other financing institutions, the ICP and NIT, for instance?

Entrepreneurs here also feel that the NEC should have been candid in admitting the difficulties caused by the changed aid and foreign loan position, credit squeeze by scheduled banks on instruction from the State Bank, and a changing investment schedule. After all, these are what matter most significantly in private sector investment in a developing country.

The NEC report has made most revealing statement about the growth of the agriculture sector in East Pakistan. It says the growth rate of this sector has been less than 1% per annum as against 3.1% in West Pakistan. That should just about knock out the bottom from East Pakistan's economy in the sense that agriculture constitutes two-thirds of the province's income.

The report lists the performance of the private sector in the two regions as one important factor of this difference. It also states that the difference of performance of private sector in the realms of agriculture is mainly due to the difference of size of agricultural holdings. Over two-thirds of West Pakistan's agricultural holdings are more than 12.5 acres in size while in East Pakistan the proportion of such holdings would not be more than 18% of all holdings. This means that the present grow-more food campaign in East Pakistan should hope to accomplish no more than a base for an eventual breakthrough in agriculture in this province.

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It is a healthy thing that the NEC report has noticed that credit facilities need to be extended and the cooperative movement required to be strengthened for a resuscitation of the agriculture sector of the province.

But what the report has overlooked is the onslaught of floods, droughts and cyclones which by now are annual features in the province. Floods alone caused damage to the tune of Rs. 2,000 to 3,000 million in the province since 1962. The people of this province have persistently demanded that flood-control or flood-protection, whatever it may be, must be taken up in the province in right earnest by treating the annual scourge of floods as a national problem. It has also been suggested, even by the related government agencies, that flood-protection works should be taken up outside regular plans to expedite it. Is this problem being treated by the government in the manner suggested? The NEC report is silent on this.

According to the Constitution, the NEC is required to suggest ways and means to remove disparity along with the report on disparity position. The report for 1966-67 falls short of the obligation.

Judged in this context, the demands by opposition parties that the government should issue a white paper on the actual disparity level as well as what the government proposes to do to remove such disparity becomes all the more forceful. The NEC report notes that inter-regional disparity is a complex and stubborn problem. It observes that a tremendous effort will have to be made by the East Pakistan government itself, supported by adequate policies and financial allocation by the central government and by the private sector of East Pakistan if the objective of reducing disparity is to be realised. One only hopes that this does not remain a pious wish.

Speak memory

They say that historical perspective adds another dimension to the memory of the dead. Fazlul Haq's death is not yet history and yet Fazlul Haq himself is the history of the Muslims of Bengal. He is so unique and rare that within his life-time, long before his death, he was a legend in this region—a part of the folklore, and almost a mythical being whose name carried that special magic which we associate with the heroes of fairy tales.

Such a being, they say, is born only once in a century or so. Fazlul Haq, however, shaped more than two generations in his own life-time and the present years still carry his aura, the indelible stamp of his great personality. Of nowhere is this more true than in the vast rural areas of this land where not only his name and his memory still live, but also, and more distinctly, his solid achievements. One has only to think of the first few decades of this century without Fazlul Haq, without the reforms and the law and the order that he brought into a decaying, crumbling social order and to a half-starved and brutally repressed peasantry, and the magnitude of the man immediately and unambiguously comes alive. But for him, the vast multitude of cultivators and workers would never have known even a fraction of the material happiness that they have today.

But for him, too, education for the Muslims of Bengal would have remained confined to primitive madrasahs for untold years. His gallant fight to bring the light of day into the lives of Bengali Muslims is symbolised not in a college or a school but in the

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very basis of the present society and the countless individuals whose learning and enlightenment have made such a society possible.

He remained a controversial figure for many of his active years.

Such people always are. For, apart from controversies about them, there are conflicts within them too. In Fazlul Haq, these were controversies of love, of devotion; often a clash between an undying love for the people and extreme political necessity; sometimes a direct challenge from the actualities to his burning visions. But they appear to be such minor flaws in a personality whose very sweep and strength moulded an entire milieu. It would be petty to call him a leader, or a statesman or a politician. He was all these—and more. He was a lover whose long affair with his people and whose courtship of their causes continued till his last mortal moments. There have been many eminent figures during and since his time—but none in whom the flame burned with such a gem-like quality. He is gone from us but his memory lives in this verdant land, in the swift and silent rivers, in the long undulating fields of paddy; in the laughter of children going to school. Airy tongues that syllabise men's names will syllabise his forever.

We shall not look upon the like of him again.

The right to an answer

The wonderful decade of reforms, sung and celebrated in countless ways, came to a climax in a welter of violence which reverberated like a dark symphony across the whole of West Pakistan last week. Beginning with student unrest in Karachi about the time when newspaper supplements were proclaiming the great reforms carried out in education, it reached its high point in Pindi where unarmed students were shot and on to a violent climax with the arrest of Mr. Z.A. Bhutto, Mr. Wali Khan and others. The situation, despite showing some sign of returning to normalcy, still remains uneasy and the apparent peace that has been achieved with extensive use of force remains unstable with hints of violence.

A clear conclusion is still difficult to draw from the recent events. But two things have emerged in bold relief. One, for the first time in many years, the people have shown that they can no longer be subdued with loud promises. 'Cabinéd, cribbed and confined' as they have been for so long, their protests unheard, their laments unheeded, Mr. Bhutto's speeches happened to touch a sympathetic chord in them. One need not be concerned here with exactly what Mr. Bhutto and the other leaders said. But one is struck with the spontaneity with which the people responded. The mass turnout wherever the major opposition leaders went is testimony to that fact. One cannot, at the same time, fail to be shocked by the totally disproportionate reaction from the administration that their speeches provoked. If their utterances touched a sympathetic chord in the people's hearts, they must have come as a jarring note to the administrative set-up which had only just finished spending huge sums of money, celebrating the 'ten golden years' of the present regime. Their reaction was too sharp, too extreme. The imposition of Section 144 and curfew, the lathi-charges

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and the firing, the calling in of the army—all denoted a state of extreme tension in the ranks of administration.

But can such repressive measures ever be a solution to the canker that has been eating both East and West Pakistan for so long? Can the use of sec. 144 and the threat of police firing ever become a way of life? Must the government continue to match violence with violence in order to retain power without ever waking up to the harsh political and economic realities of the country?

There is little rapport now left between the people and the government. So many fences have been put up between the 'ruler' and the 'ruled' that the loudest shout from this side is lost in the wilderness. It is no use saying the demonstration in various parts of West Wing were instigated by certain motivated persons. They were, on the other hand, a spontaneous expression of the deep frustration that the people have been living with for so long. The arrest of the leaders has deprived the masses of a voice and left the region leaderless, but it is only a question of time before such deep-seated frustration finds expression again. Such repressive actions on the part of the government are likely to fan the very issues that have been smouldering for so long.

The administration, if it seeks to govern the country with a modicum of peace, must first come to terms with the realities of the present situation. Some of the demands that have been ventilated are genuine and require immediate action; some of the issues that have been raised are real and need to be examined with honesty and objectivity. They cannot be evaded or hushed up, at least not for long. But to tackle them on a realistic footing requires courage and a sense of moral purpose which the present regime has so far shown no sign of possessing. Can they do it now, now when this strife-torn country is inching its way towards greater chaos, greater anarchy? The answer, which can only be given by the regime itself, will determine whether we live in a free and sovereign country and have a say in our own affairs or whether the regime has evolved a system of government in which the speeches of those who oppose the government will automatically be termed 'disruptionist and anti-state'.

East wing lights flame of protest

Two persons were killed, 23 injured, six of them seriously, in firings by EPR and police in different parts of Dhaka City on Saturday. Twenty-eight-year-old Abdul Majid was the first victim of the firing by police at Nilkhet in the morning. The bullet pierced Majid's chest. He died in the Medical College Hospital. The Medical College source said that another person was brought dead to the hospital and the body was taken straight to the morgue. Police, however, confirmed only one death while, on the other hand, unconfirmed reports put the death figure at three.

The firings took place when people were picketing at street corners and other places to make Saturday's transport strike, called by Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, a success. Police intervened in many places and there were lathi charges, teargassing and finally firing in five places.

The strike was called by the NAP chief to protest the repressive measures taken by the present regime against the opposition forces in the country.

The call for the strike was given at the end of a massive public meeting the Maulana spoke at Paltan Maidan on Friday where he had said that rights of the people could not be realised without mass movement. Maulana Bhashani also gave a call for hartal on December 12.

But following Saturday's incidents, the Maulana has given another call for observance of complete hartal today (Sunday) in protest against the firings and to mourn the death of its victims.

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The NAP chief gave this fresh call while addressing a big gathering on Saturday afternoon at Baitul Mokarram and reaffirmed the decision of his party to continue the struggle.

A procession was taken out from Baitul Mokarram after the Maulana completed his speech. The procession was intercepted at Jinnah Avenue by the police who fired teargas shells at the processionists who dispersed from there only to reassemble at Nawabpur Road. Again there was confrontation between the police and the processionists and police opened fire. As a result two persons received bullet injuries. They are Abdus Sattar, 26 and Abdul Kassem, 28. In the morning firings, 28-year-old Ishaque received a bullet wound when he was sitting inside a shop at Nilkhet along with the deceased Abdul Majid. The shop was closed with the shutters down. The bullets pierced the tin shutter and hit both Majid and Ishaque.

Near the spot where the firing took place, picketers were trying to persuade the motorists to keep their vehicles off the road. The police chased the picketers. Some street urchins at that time pelted the police with bricks. The police reciprocated with bullets. The outcome: one death, one injury. This occurred at about half past ten in the morning.

At noon the situation became very tense at Jinnah Avenue. A swelling crowd there intercepted vehicles and set fire to a garbage truck. The crowd also stopped fire-brigade people from approaching the spot by showering brickbats continuously. A fireman was reportedly injured. Police on arrival there chased the crowd who stopped fire-brigade people from approaching the spot by showering brickbats continuously. A fireman was reportedly injured. Police on arrival there chased the crowd and people took shelter here and there. An EPR contingent also arrived at the spot but the crowd continued to throw stones and after some time EPR opened fire.

Abdul Matin, 22 and Abul, 15 fell victim to bullet injuries. Matin received a bullet wound in the abdomen and Abul a little below abdomen.

Abul was later operated upon but his condition was reported still serious. Matin was being given oxygen. Another person admitted to the hospital was the fire service man, Sadeq.

Many injured persons left the hospital after receiving first aid although they needed further treatment. They left the hospital apprehending police action against them.

A large number of people were arrested by the police all over the city. Picketers were rounded up at Jinnah Avenue, New Market, Nawabpur, Naya Paltan and Purana Paltan.

A number of cars brought out by conventionalists and some other people were pelted with stones at Purana Paltan road crossing, secretariat Gate and Nawabpur. A jeep driven by conventionist MNA, Mr. L.A. Lashkar, was chased by street urchins at Topkhana Road. The MNA was returning from the National Assembly at high speed.

Police patrolled the city throughout the day in trucks and jeeps with fixed bayonets. A police control room was set up at the commissioner's office at Segun Bagicha where a large number of reserve police was kept.

The riot van was also kept ready for emergency purpose.

The police was guarding the morgue at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Maulana Bhashani visited the morgue and the hospital wards to see the victims of Saturday's incidents.

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To the barricades!

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Behind the cavalcade of terror, that this besieged, torn but valiant city has seen, lies the heroic struggle of the students of Dhaka who hoisted the flag of defiance and protest and stood firm to fight the regime's repression with all they had—their lives, their bodies and their undying spirit. Here is a brief chronicle of the events that culminated in a series of showdowns between the students and the people on one side and the administration on the other.

'There is no seed like the martyr's blood'. The revolutionary wave has now flooded the entire country. The reign of terror and oppression let loose by the government only strengthened the movement and gave it a new dimension. The martyrdom of these students against the autocratic regime flamed forth into rebellion.

In spite of the onslaught upon them too, the females have come out with undaunted spirit to join the struggle. The provincial metropolis was convulsed by thundering slogans raised by streams of protesters.

The prolonged battle between the police and EPR, on the one hand, and students and people, on the other, assumed the state of a virtual civil war. Police showered teargas shells and opened fire at several places which turned Dhaka into a nightmare city. Here is an account of the events that took place up to and including Thursday.

A Demand Day was observed in the city on 17th January in response to the call of the DAC (Democratic Action Committee). A large procession marched from Baitul Mukarram to the Dhaka District Bar Library. The demonstrators were lathi-charged indiscriminately and the riot van sprayed coloured water. Political leaders were severely assaulted by the police. Maulana Muhammad Ali and Maulana Shahidullah were arrested.

Baitul Mukarram was cordoned off by contingents of police. Just after the Jumma prayer, the DAC leaders, workers and supporters started to bring out the scheduled procession. But the police blocked the road. The leaders broke through the cordon. When the processionists were marching through Jinnah Avenue, the police fell upon them and the riot car began to spray coloured water on the leaders. The procession broke into several fragments. The police also resorted to lathi charge near Nawabpur Railway Crossing and pounced on a group of DAC leaders and workers near Azad Cinema. The processionists shouted slogans demanding restoration of democracy and overthrow of the present government.

And that signalled the beginning of a movement the like of which has never been witnessed before.

The student movement which has been shaping up over a period of time coincided with DAC's Demand Day so far as its timing was concerned. But the political content of its 11-point programme bristled with revolutionary fervour, cutting across the conventional party politics and embracing people's demands for radical change of the system, the economy and the society.

While the inhibited and hesitant DAC leadership looked on, the leadership of a radical socialist movement passed from their hands on to the determined students, the industrial workers and the lower middle class.

And so began the story of a new movement that inspired at least a million people to fuse into a revolutionary mass of people, chanting anti-establishment, anti-feudal, anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist slogans.

The DAC show over, a combat between students and police ensued. As soon as the students of Dhaka University took out a procession at 12.15 p.m. after the meeting at Bat-tala, the police and the riot van swung into action. Indiscriminate lathi-charge and shelling of

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Rising columns of smoke darkened the sky over the campus which, by then, looked like a battlefield.

teargas compelled the students to rush back to the varsity campus for shelter.

The police chased them inside and beat them ruthlessly. Twenty-five students were arrested.

The students assembled again at 12.30 p.m. They began to shower brickbats upon the police. The latter replied by firing teargas shells and hurling stones too. The clash continued for about 45 minutes.

After holding an unscheduled meeting in which a call given to observe a strike on Saturday, the students once again came out in a procession, chanting slogans. But the people chased them and fired teargas shells. The students dispersed only to re-assemble inside the campus.

A procession was again brought out. The processionists visited different students' halls and hostels and called for making the strike a success on the following day.

After the scheduled meeting on Saturday at 11.30 a.m. was over, the students of the varsity and other institutions tried to bring out a procession from the varsity campus. The police blocked the way. A pitched battle, lasting about 2 hours, followed. The students hurled brickbats at the police who fired shells ceaselessly while the riot van gushed out coloured water. Rising columns of smoke darkened the sky over the campus which, by then, looked like a battlefield. The police force was reinforced by contingents of EPR. The militant students raised barricades again and again. Brickbats were also thrown at the police from Rokeya Hall. The police entered the varsity staff quarters. The clash, however, came to a standstill at about 1.30 pm. Several policemen and a large number of students were injured.

Dr. Mafizuddin Ahmed, the President of Dhaka University Teachers' Association, and three other professors appeared at the spot. The militant students flocked around them in front of the university building. Dr. Ahmed condemned the police action.

The students are, no doubt, much politicised today. They have never been more united.

But as a class they have their shortcomings. Students all over the world have acted as a catalyst for a political change. In China, the cultural revolution was triggered by them, but others completed it. In France, the student uprising failed because of the betrayal by the Left parties. In Britain, the intensity of the student rebellion is on the wane.

All these facts lead to one conclusion; the political parties must come out of their shell and act now or never. But some of the partners of DAC are keenly looking for an opportunity to start a dialogue with the Establishment. Some have already cautioned the people against 'ultra-revolutionary and adventuristic slogans'.

But time is still left for the serious political parties. The 11-point demands of the students constitute a far better uniting point for the democratic forces than the charter of DAC. It remains to be seen whether the political parties join the movement or trail behind.

All these facts lead to one conclusion; the political parties must come out of their shell and act now or never.

People seize the lead

The provincial government's forces, the EPR and the police, were thrown back to the defensive. The people clinched a victory.

The people virtually conquered the provincial metropolis on Friday, January 24 when their pent-up indignation finally erupted like a volcano and carried all fears of the regime, all the terror they had so long felt of its presence, in the molten stream of their anger. Faced with this, the civil administration completely collapsed. The provincial government's forces, the EPR and the police were thrown back to the defensive. The people clinched a victory.

The provincial administration could restore a semblance of order only with the help of the central government. The army was called in, curfew was clamped down and the indignity of a state of semi-martial law began.

Friday witnessed the victory of an unprecedented mass upsurge. Life in the entire province came to a stand still. A complete hartal was observed throughout the province. The people were determined to show their indignation at the murder of Asaduzzaman, slain cruelly by the bullet of the police. They seemed to have resolved to bring to an end this unjust state of affairs fulfilling the unfinished task of the martyr—the students' manifesto containing their 11-point demands. Six more precious lives were lost in police firings on the day. But undaunted, the movement is gathering more and more momentum.

Grief stricken as they were at the death of the comrades, the people were armed with a grim determination to fight out to the end the issue: whether they are their own masters or whether they will continue to suffer at the hands of an autocratic, dictatorial regime. Though the day was for mourning Asad's death, the mourners did not weep. The solemn occasion, in fact, gave birth to the battle-cry: 'end tyranny, end autocracy, end dictatorship, end anti-people regime.'

Friday saw the culmination of the chain of events that had started on January 17, when the militant students community launched their historic movement for the realisation of their 11-point demands. Defying Section 144 they brought out a procession from the Dhaka University Arts Buildings. The police teargassed and lathi-charged them.

On January 18, they observed complete strike in their respective institutions against police atrocities and excesses. Another battle ensued. Valiant students tired out the police and the EPR after an hour-long pitched battle, and paraded through the streets. On January 19 students of Engineering University brought out a procession and again fought the police and the EPR. On January 20, the fighting student community forced the police guards to retreat after a heroic fight for hours when the police obstructed their procession. That was the day Law student Asaduzzaman died.

On January 21, a complete hartal was again observed and over a lakh of mourners walked the city streets after attending a Gaibana Janaza at the Paltan Maidan for Asaduzzaman. The EPR and police opened fire and wounded six persons. Ten thousand students took out a mile long Blackflag procession on January 22. On January 23, the revolutionary students who had by now received their baptism of fire brought out a huge two-mile-long and 25-thousand-strong torchlight procession on the city streets. Silhouetted in the glow of a thousand torches, they took a 'flaming oath' to fight until the victory of their movement. This spread like jungle fire. The fuse for Friday, January 24, had been lit.

The situation in the city was in an extremely explosive state from early Friday morning. The people had already joined the students both in their revulsion of an oppressive government and in fighting for a better future.

The administration, meanwhile, was flexing all its muscles to crush the irresistible people's movement, initiated and led by the students.

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The officers and the employees of the Secretariat had stopped work.

The day began on a deceptively calm note. The hartal-observing people came out on the streets in thousands. No vehicle plied the roads. The EPR and police guards did not make any provocations.

Volunteers went to autonomous bodies, like the EPIDC, WAPDA, DIT and Agriculture Development corporation offices, and the employees there, including the officers, joined the hartal.

By 10 a.m. all the government offices and all private establishments, commercial and industrial, were closed except the Provincial Secretariat.

Trouble began at the Secretariat. The striking people came out in a large procession from the Motijheel Commercial Area to the secretariat. On the way, they were joined by the employees of the post office, just opposite the secretariat.

When the procession reached the Secretariat, it was confronted by police guards. In the meantime, the officers and the employees of the Secretariat had stopped work. No business was transacted. They welcomed the picketers and were ready to respond to their call. But that was not to be. And so the orgy of the killing of unarmed and innocent citizens by the police began.

The people forced their way through the gates and the police barrier. A group went up to the first floor of the Secretariat. Police started firing teargas shells. The people retaliated by brickbatting and hurling back the unexploded teargas shells.

All of a sudden the police opened fire. The time was 11.05 a.m. The police firing infuriated the people. Their numbers swelled and the fight became all the more furious. The police again opened fire at 12:15 p.m.

Four persons were killed. A vast procession, carrying the body of 14-year-old Motiur Rahman Mallick, began its mourning march towards the Medical College Hospital.

In the meantime, some vehicles inside the Secretariat were set ablaze. A tin shed was burnt to ashes.

The main Secretariat buildings caught fire and two record rooms of the Board of Revenue were damaged.

EPR appeared on the scene. An extremely tense situation prevailed. The gathering was demanding a dead body, which they alleged the police had dragged inside the Secretariat. Some pressmen reportedly saw that body inside the Secretariat at about 12:20 p.m.

While a pitched battle between the people and the police and EPR was going on at the Secretariat, thousands of people attacked the residence of the Convention League MNA Mr. L.A. Laskar and the Press Trust Building where the 'Morning News', and the 'Dainik Pakistan' were housed. The angry people set on fire the MNA's house and the press trust building. The fire blazed for about eight hours. Here also the police opened fire and killed one person.

The ransacking of the Press Trust Building seemed to have been conducted in an organised manner. There was no looting. The staff and all others who were inside were earlier warned and were assisted to safe places. And precautions were taken that the fire would not touch any other buildings.

Earlier in the morning a Basic Democrat had attacked a procession of school boys at Malibagh and allegedly stabbed processionists.

The people set fire to the residence of the BD. Then at the Paltan Maidan at 3 p.m. history was created when about five lakh people participated in the Janaza of Rustam and Moqbul who were killed by police firing on the day.

This human sea was composed of students, workers, members of the general public. Peasants came all the way from the adjoining villages carrying ploughs, scythes, spades and other farming implements.

The mammoth Janaza prayer was charged with emotion. But there were no tears in the eyes of mourners. They all appeared to be soldiers in a crusade—their faces grim with determination. They had hardly any time to

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weep. Before them was only one objective—to win the war against tyranny and oppression.

The stream of protesting citizens seemed unending as it proceeded with the bodies of two young victims of firing towards the Government House. Then the procession decided to turn its course towards Iqbal hall Maidan to hear the Student Action Committee on the future course of action. Never before such a spectacle of determined marchers was witnessed in Dhaka or elsewhere in the country. It was a revolutionary crowd that chanted slogans of people's democracy, social and economic justice, end of bureaucratic control over the press and universities, end of dictatorial regime, full provincial autonomy, scrapping of arms and defense pacts with the imperialist bloc and restoration of full parliamentary democracy and sovereignty of the people, withdrawal of the 'Agartala Conspiracy Case', release of political prisoners and the like.

The procession was all through disciplined despite the emotions aroused by the killing. It converged on the Maidan which immediately turned into a sea of human heads. In the meeting, the father of deceased Motiur Rahman Mallick, a young student, told the massive crowd that he was not at all grieved over the brutal killing of his young son. For, his son had laid down his life for a just cause and would continue to live among the countless other young souls who are waging the struggle against oppression and tyranny.

The mood of the crowd of over half a million could be unnerving to even the mightiest of rulers. Unarmed, the masses are the mightiest of all forces. The provincial administration which excels in the display of crude power shivered in its shoes until the army was called in to their assistance and a curfew was imposed.

What next?

President Ayub Khan's dramatic renunciation of power was followed, in less than twenty-four hours, by the equally dramatic withdrawal of the 'Agartala Conspiracy Case' and the release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. These two events are significant milestones in the history of the struggle of the people of Pakistan. In themselves, they are eloquent enough testimony to the invincibility of the people's will. In the context of the present situation, the blood that flowed and the guns that roared from Pabna to Pindi symbolise the regime's eventual recognition of the reality obtaining in Pakistan today.

Yet the regime's surrender is nowhere near absolute. President Ayub has announced his intention to step down from office. He has said nothing about dismantling the huge and hugely corrupt and inept system that has been built up in the dark decade. He has expressed his desire to iron out the country's problems with the active participation of the opposition failing which he would present his unilateral proposals to the National Assembly. He has given no indication either of the nature and agenda of the talks with the opposition nor defined what form his unilateral proposals are to take. Apart from the possibility of restoring universal adult franchise in the country, the proposed amendments remain a big question mark. Sheikh Mujib's release is a special triumph for the people of East Pakistan. It was their unrelenting determination to fight for his release that finally won the day against a reluctant regime. It was their movement which convinced the rulers that nothing else would do but to release him and others and drop the alleged conspiracy trial.

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However, we should not at this moment lose sight of the prime objectives. The regime is beaten, but it is far from being vanquished. All its trappings remain and so does its capability to connive and intrigue against the people. It will not allow itself to surrender totally without a last ditch attempt to perpetuate its system in some form or the other and to serve vested interests both within and outside the country. It has many tricks up its sleeve. It will undoubtedly make subtle and clever attempts to split the opposition, drive a wedge between the major political parties and line up one section against another. It may also invoke the name of Islam to divide the people. It has many lures to dangle before the opposition leaders, some of them being too tempting to be refused,

Now more than ever, at this crucial juncture of history, it is necessary for all the democratic forces of the country to unite and form a common front against the pressures that are to come. The battle will be fought on two fronts against the regime and against the forces of reaction. It is here that the ultimate test lies. It will be a test for both of the integrity of the leaders and the strength of their respective parties. The party has yet to emerge in this country that can face and overcome this two-pronged onslaught in both wings of the country. The moment is at hand when the progressive forces must band together to defend the people's rights and to carry the fight into the opponent's camp. They bear the heavy responsibility of fulfilling the people's aspirations and they must forge strong bonds of unity amongst themselves to be able to reach the goal. Nothing less than the destiny of this nation is at stake. Any faltering now will gravely affect the course of future events.

The coming days will be trying ones for all. The people would be looking forward eagerly for the beginning of their salvation. The leaders themselves would be on trial. The moment of truth is not far off. Let us hope all democratic and patriotic forces remain steadfast and true to the country and the people.

Mujib's release: A triumph of the people

The city of Dhaka witnessed the advent of a new epoch in the history of this land yesterday (Saturday) as the news of the release of all prisoners in the case 'State versus Sheikh Mujib and others' spread like wildfire around midday. On hearing the news of Sheikh Mujib's release, people in their thousands burst on to the streets, shouting slogans of jubilation, and for hours it seemed that all roads led to road No. 32 of Dhanmondi Residential Area where the Sheikh's house is situated.

The house was literally mobbed and the Sheikh, after nearly two years and nine months of gruelling captivity, looked admirably fit but deeply moved by the expression of love and tenderness of the people. From the house, at about 3 p.m., he went to offer his homage to the Language Martyrs at the Shaheed Minar and then to the graves of Sher-e-Bangla and Shahid Suhrawardy.

Not less than 100,000 people gathered at these places and about the same number waited in and around the Outer Stadium. The road to the Stadium was lined with thousands with bouquets and garlands in their hands ready to shower on their beloved leader.

Lt. Colonel Moazzem Hussain, Mr. K. M. Shamsur Rahman and the EPSU leader, Mrs. Motia Chowdhury (she was also released from Dhaka Central Jail yesterday), were also profusely garlanded and taken in procession to the Outer Stadium. In this jubilation, however, a note of sorrow grieved many a heart. It was for Sergeant Zahurul Huq, another accused in the

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'case', who was killed in custody only a few days ago. However, the feel of victory helped all to forget the unspeakable atrocities that the valiant people of East Pakistan suffered and to demonstrate once and for all their rejection of the present regime and all that it stood for. How convincingly have they displayed the invincibility of the true will of the people against which even the strongest citadel of power has to crumble like a house of cards.

Soon after his release, Sheikh Mujib was contacted at home and asked about his opinion on the students' 11-point programme. The Sheikh emphatically declared his support for the 11-point programme and said that it not only incorporated all the demands made in his 6-points but also contained points that are related to the demands imbued in them.

On being asked whether he was going to Rawalpindi for talks, he said that he was going to Rawalpindi to have talks with the government. He expressed his willingness to have talks with Maulana Bhashani, Air Marshal Asghar Khan, Mr. Z.A. Bhutto and General Azam Khan before going to the talks. He declared that it would be up to the people to decide the way he should move. He intended to put the question before the people at a public meeting to be held today at the Race Course at 3 p.m.

He paid glowing tributes to the martyrs of the democratic struggle who gave their lives to force the pace of political development that has now been crowned with the release of 'Agartala Case' prisoners.

Another source claimed that the Sheikh has said that there cannot be any talks with the government until all the political detenues are released.

The concerned political observers who have been watching the developments regarding the release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and other 'Agartala Case' prisoners and the political manoeuvres that were

going on round the clock to persuade him to accept parole and take part in that so-called 'dialogue' heaved sighs of relief when the Sheikh was heard to endorse the 11-point programme without reservation and also were heartened by his keenness to meet Maulana Bhashani, the leader with a mass following who refused to go to the RTC.

Some observers believe that as the 11-point programme has now the unqualified support of two parties with mass based-Awami League (six points) and NAP (Bhashani Group), a united front of the two is probably more than a likely speculation. They feel that only the united action of these two parties can win political and economic emancipation for the people of East Pakistan.

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A pledge renewed

If
Holiday
at all belongs
to any one, it
belongs to
the people of
Pakistan.

Holiday begins its fifth year of uninterrupted publication with this issue. It is not the fact that we have survived for four years that gives us satisfaction but the fact that we did so with absolute regularity, in the teeth of adversity, and against odds which our readers can hardly imagine. That makes this an occasion. An idea, an intellectual postulate, that of projecting our people's will—too often harshly crushed—and their aspirations—too mockingly ignored—kept us going, often against the force of circumstance. What gives us a small measure of pride is that we did succeed in portraying as honestly as we could the desperate plight of the masses under the tyrannical rule of Ayub, their destitution, their helplessness and the blighted condition of this land during the 'Decade of Progress'. Our successive attacks on Ayub's regime and the continuous highlighting of national problems contributed, no matter how fractionally, to penetrating the thick fog of fear and terror that the previous administration had managed to cast over the nation. Eventually, when the movement began, Holiday found its true metier as the chronicler of those tempestuous days. As the country erupted from one end to the other in an awesome demonstration of the people's will, this paper used all its resources to record with fidelity those historic days and events that shaped the nation's destiny. When a shattered, shame-faced and thoroughly disgraced regime vacated the seat of power, at least one part of our mission had been fulfilled.

We have not indulged in sectarian politics nor have we ever allowed this paper to become the exclusive organ of any political party or individual. If Holiday at all belongs to any one, it belongs to the people of Pakistan. As for our ideology as reflected in the paper's

policy and its news coverage it has been and will always be progressive , mass-oriented, left-biased, if you will.

The paper's policy should leave little room for doubt about its political colour and its commitment to the people. Yet, the bigoted, the reactionaries, the retrogrades have not spared us in their campaign of vilification and slander. For certain circles, this paper's continued existence and its unflinching policy-line are a sharp thorn in their side, a pain naggingly reminding them that their own era has come to a close in Pakistan. Let them again remember that all their antics and all their masquerades cannot hide the age within.

Ayub has been overthrown and a new regime has taken over as an interim government. The task of rebuilding this torn and shattered country is immense. Political and economic problems have multiplied like a hydra-headed monster and the times are indeed critical. Each effort is a new beginning. In these troubled times, every individual and every institution is called upon to play the most important role of their existence. The press, as a medium of mass communication, is a part of national consciousness, contributing vitally to its sum-total of knowledge. Holiday, though a young member of the national press, will not falter in its aims. We renew our pledge to the people—the pledge to speak for them and their rights, irrespective of what devices adversity may yet create.

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Farakka: The whirlpool of trouble

Knowledgeable circles do not believe that the implementation part of the job is at all going to start in the foreseeable future.

Farakka is very much in the news now. A great deal is being said on the subject. All sorts of alarms are also being raised. But one is tempted to ask whether alternatives are being planned and practical solutions offered with the same seriousness.

This question begs a reply from relevant quarters. Despite the WAPDA Chairman's talk, the Ganges Barrage Project is not expected to go beyond a repeat study during the 4th Five Year Plan period. Knowledgeable circles do not believe that the implementation part of the job is at all going to start in the foreseeable future. After all, the project will cost several hundred crores of rupees.

The EPWAPDA Chairman, in a recent talk, claimed that work on the Ganges Project had already started. But in fact, as far as reports go, he has signed only a few contracts for preparation of the design.

Chairman Abbas could not give assurance of a sufficient supply of water to keep the project going whether by arrangement for division of available Ganges water or by alternate provisions on the lines of the Indus basin replacement works.

Last year a local vernacular daily suggested such an alternative arrangement in one of its lead reports. The suggestion was for constructing a barrage on the Jamuna and digging link canals to carry the Jamuna's excess water to the receding Ganga (Padma).

It also called for a treaty with India for replacement works on the pattern of the Indus and also for an Indo-Pak agreement stipulating the extent of mutual right with regard to the use of the major rivers running through the countries.

Neither the WAPDA Chairman nor, for that matter, the Government has come forward as yet to enlighten the public on the issue involved. People are only being fed with stories depicting the grim picture emerging from the diversion of the Ganges water at Farakka by October '70. Nobody disputes this. But what they are interested to know are concrete plans for forestalling such calamity and for neutralising the effect of Farakka.

Campaign : There is a fresh campaign on about the receding water of the Ganges. It seems a bit intriguing in view of the fact that the administration knows very well that India will start operating Farakka in October '70. The leader of Pakistan Technical Mission who had visited Farakka in June, 1968 made a statement on his return to this effect. There was no contradiction.

Yet one year before the scheduled date, an argument for the recession of waters is being advanced. In actual fact, the recession this year has been rather late, though a rapid one at that. People would have been happier if some promptness was displayed in the matter of firm commitments for the construction of the Ganges barrage on this side of the border.

Coming to Farakka and the associated ills, there are as yet no citable efforts on the part of the government to counteract them. The whole planning is now under World Bank experts who are against East Pakistan's surface water projects.

Underground water: According to the World Bank, there is a huge underground water reservoir in East Pakistan which needs the services of foreign consultants, contractors and construction equipment to be turned into natural wealth. Possibly the only condition for such foreign help is that East Pakistan would have to believe what they are told, do what they are asked to do.

We may recall that U.S. AID paid only about Rs. 20 million out of Rs. 80 million that was spent by EPWAPDA for the preparation of a master plan by the

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International Engineering Company. This plan was practically set aside by the World Bank and at their initiative EPWAPDA terminated the contract with ECO and appointed a Canadian firm whose General Manager is a retired US army general.

The World Bank has quite a following in our high offices. Agricultural Development Corporation has launched a programme to sink 40,000 tube wells, all of which are to be imported from selected countries. From what has been done so far in this field, it seems there is a race going on to please the World Bank regardless of the outcome.

The people of East Pakistan are interested in genuine flood control and water development projects. They are interested in the Ganges Barrage Project. They want to see their government cling to the legitimate claims and come round to a mutual agreement. They want alternative planning and immediate implementation of the Ganges Barrage Project. In the background of past performance, however, many have come to suspect the intentions of certain quarters.

Construction of Farakka barrage started in 1949. Dr. Hansen recommended the project to the Government of West Bengal in 1952. At the same time the FAO had recommended to the Government of Pakistan to utilise 20,000 cusecs of the Ganges water. Despite this, in 1960, when the Indian Technical Mission came to East Pakistan, the Pakistani officials handed over a project report that envisaged utilisation of only 3,500 cusecs.

The Ayub Government was never interested in East Pakistan's development. It was more interested in the Indus Basin development works and in the fortunes of the 22 big families.

Paradoxically, while the campaign continues in respect of the Farakka barrage, it seems we have leased out the development of East Pakistan to World Bank and U.S. AID who have repeatedly gone against large-scale flood control and development of water resources

for agricultural development (vide IBRD/IDA Report of 1967 Mission and subsequent agenda thereto). The World Bank categorically expressed its unwillingness to finance any project that involves use of so-called international rivers and indulged in theorising against any venture in that direction.

On the Indian side: India had two barrages across the Ganges, two across the Jamuna, one across the Sarda and another across the Sone in the days before partition. After partition, they constructed two dams across the Chambal, one across the Sone, one across Rupti, one barrage across the Gandak and one barrage across the Kosi. They have plans for the Charghara and a few other tributaries of the Ganges.

Pakistan never forcefully objected to the development of the tributaries of the Ganges by India except in the case of the construction of barrages across the Kosi, the Gandak and the Ganges at Farakka and even that was too late and too murky. Mr. Khawja Azimuddin, former Chief Engineer, Irrigation, now Managing Director, Associated Consulting Engineer, reportedly wrote to a central engineering authority that East Pakistan would not be affected by the use of Kosi water by India in dry season.

It was pointed out in 1957-58 that Pakistan could expect no more than 4,500 cusecs in October to March if India diverted 20,000 cusecs of the Ganges water at Farakka after her projects on the tributaries were completed and an agreement among the Indian States reached over the sharing of the Ganges water.

A year earlier, one of the Bengali dailies of Dhaka suggested an alternative plan to break the stalemate in respect of the use of international rivers in East Pakistan to the ire of the Central Government. The story goes that a gentleman in the E.P. Planning Board blew his top when he was asked to comment on it. The plan was shoved away by the E.P. Planning Board and the Central Government.

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However, the new regime is reported to have taken up the plan for study. In the meantime, EPWAPDA continues doing its repeat business. It is signing contracts, one after the other, for preparation of feasibility projects. Some of these studies are being conducted for the second or third time at huge cost in foreign exchange by the same firm on the plea that their earlier studies were not intensive enough to satisfy the requirements of the financier, namely the World Bank.

The EPWAPDA Chairman seems to have chosen T.V., press, radio and the public platform as his field to solve the Farakka and flood problems.

The new regime is reported to have taken up the plan for study.

Bhashani-the shadow and the substance

Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, who has lived through more than eight and a half decades from the day he was born in an obscure village in Sirajganj, is not a patron-saint. He is a political animal who has waded through a stream of consciousness to become what he is today. His political career reads like an Aesop's fable, which, notwithstanding its elementary simplicity and unsophisticated format, has a very important moral to offer. It is more empirical than rational and as such more akin to reality.

Thus the dynamic of the Maulana's extraordinary political transformation from a compulsive religious leader to an impulsive socialist should be studied more sympathetically than we are wont to do. He epitomises the involuntary fusion of anti-feudal, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist politics in a peasant-society. And in doing so, he took politics to heart rather than the head, and made it a way of life for himself.

The background of his involvement in the peasant movement dates back to the early twentieth century when he started taking active part in localised peasant ferment against such zamindar-tyrants as Maharani Jahnabi of Santosh, Raja Manmatha of Santosh, the zamindar of Dubalhati in Naogaon and others.

His confrontation with the local feudals of Tangail culminated in his externment from Tangail and Mymensingh district and later from Pabna under the infamous Rowlatt Act.

His induction into the peasant movement was a natural process. Orphaned and homeless since early boyhood, he had been moving among the poor peasantry

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who were exploited mercilessly by the feudal lords and the rural money-lenders. The Maulana's primary contribution lies in this role in a semifeudalistic setting.

Although the Maulana has journeyed a long way from a mere rural agitator to progressively that of a secular mass leader and finally a revolutionary socialist, his contradictions are far too many to be ignored by any political analyst. His obduracy to respect the bounds of discipline, his irrational emphasis on the power of religion, his vacillations at moments of crisis and his recent relapse to an overtly communalistic approach to class politics are political inhibitions which an avowed revolutionary should consciously shed.

He is more concerned with the motivation than the mechanics, with fragmented agitation rather than organisation. In the process, his call for movement tends to peter out in a disorganised mayhem of infructuous outbursts notwithstanding his potentiality to weld the masses in a revolutionary struggle.

This inadequacy of the Maulana has often been malignantly equated by his detractors with what they call, 'wilful compromise'. His enemies being much too powerful, they thus paint him as a devil who thrives on agitation, without having any political objective other than creating chaos.

On the other hand, the different shades of the Left failed to appreciate this inadequacy of the Maulana and, instead of making the most out of his grass-roots politics, are involved in infighting of the worst nature. The irony is, the Maulana, like a big banyan tree, has always sheltered the Left and offered them a spring-board to launch themselves. But they missed every opportunity over the last 22 years and passed on the buck of their failure to the Maulana, time and again.

This is the tragedy of Maulana and this is also the tragedy of the Left in East Pakistan. Notwithstanding the intrinsic affinity that exists between the two, no proper rapport could be established. The end-result has been confusion—a confusion that is unprecedented in any peoples' democratic struggle in any part of the world.

Idolatry and Tagore

A lot of nonsense has been going on in East Pakistan about Tagore and his place in our culture and literature. The Fascists —Jamat and non-Jamat— are up in arms against him purely from communal antipathy. There is no crusade against such non-Mohammadans as Shakespeare, Goethe, Gorky or James Joyce. Such mentally sick people, although they do not deserve a serious hearing, should be kept under watch as they are potentially dangerous beings, capable of rousing communal frenzy in unsuspecting, ignorant hearts. As they are easily recognisable because of the 'stench' that they release from the moment they open their mouths, in a way they are less problematic for the saner section of society—the only action needed being the right blow in the right place at the right moment.

But the problem becomes complicated when we are confronted with two other sections of the lobby that are irreconcilably committed to making Tagore an inalienable part of our cultural heritage. Recently, we have been noticing the activities of these sections with alarm.

One section, realising that Tagore must remain with us, has taken upon itself the task of 'Islamising' Tagore in order to make him 'acceptable' to the Muslims. Some of their members look for so-called 'Islamic' Sufism in his writing, some recall how anti-Hindu he has been. One recalled how he had exhorted Muslims to separate from 'mean' Hindus for their own good, etc.

The attitude is basically communal. If Shakespeare could be accepted with his Christian parentage, why could not Tagore be absolved of the 'crime' of his Hindu birth?

The second group is the most intrinsically retrogressive of the whole lot. In the name of loving

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Tagore they seem to shed all sense of proportion. Although claimants to leftist ideals, these people flout their very premise by raising Tagore to the level of idolatry. One well-known local cultural group, belonging implicitly to the pro-Moscow group socialists, has been seeking its vocabulary for Tagore adulation in Hindu mythology. Certain words (e.g. 'propoti') that they often use are far from secular, in fact they are exclusive to Hindu religion.

We accept Tagore not as a Hindu or a Brahma but as a great humanist who rose above the narrow limits of religion and nationality. The logic that makes Shakespeare a part of the world's cultural heritage also holds good for Tagore.

Idolatry is unfit for civilised society.

Mujib's secret session with US diplomat

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Awami League chief, had a secret meeting with Mr. Archer K. Blood, the U.S. Consul-General in Dhaka, on October 21. Accompanied by another U.S. diplomat, Mr. Blood called on Sheikh Mujib at his Dhanmondi residence at about 9.15 a.m. The three met behind closed doors in the Sheikh's ground-floor drawing room for one hour. What transpired in this strange meeting has been kept a guarded secret. The Sheikh has apparently not taken anybody from his party into his confidence in this respect. The public relations department of Awami League, which meticulously keeps the press, radio and T.V. informed of every movement of the A.L. leader, kept completely mum on this meeting.

Private meetings between foreign diplomats and national leaders are an unusual event. And if such a meeting takes place between U.S. diplomats and a leader of Sheikh's stature, who claims to be the sole symbol of Bangladesh, and if the timing coincides with the election period, the meeting takes on an extraordinary significance, to say the least. Mr. Blood, who was posted in Dhaka only early this year, cannot be expected to waste a valuable hour on mere gossip when the Sheikh is in the thick of campaigning for the elections which may well decide his fate as well as the fate of the country, one way or the other. It could not, however, be ascertained whether it was Sheikh or Mr. Blood who took the initiative for this meeting.

It may be recalled that a few months back, when the ultra-reactionary Jamat-e-Islami of Maududi, which allegedly draws its inspiration from abroad, was on the

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war path against the progressive forces, national leaders and the national press had complained of interference in the domestic affairs of Pakistan by the U.S. Ambassador, Mr. Farland. Mr. Farland is credited with having served his country with distinction in Indonesia and in Latin America during turbulent times. The Sheikh-Blood meeting, thus, may not be an isolated event. The neo-colonialist designs of the imperialist powers are a fact of life in the developing countries. And Pakistan is a developing country. Whatever may be their game, Sheikh can afford to try to play the role of Chiang Kai Shek only at his own peril. Iskander Mirza was betrayed by his collaborators and the Ayub was toppled down by the awakened masses. Mujib, a creation of the people's movement, cannot but be aware of the realities obtaining in the country. In his election harangues, he has been harping on the theme: 'I don't practise politics of votes. I don't want power. I want to realise the demands of the people. If the elections fail to fulfill the people's demands, I shall launch a vigorous movement.' Will Mujib keep his promise? Will he remain with the people who saved his life and made him the Colossus that he is today?

Our people can bear no more: Regime fails the east wing

The arrival of 40 trained British servicemen, belonging to Commando units from Singapore with helicopters and Land-rovers for massive relief operation as an advance party of 650 British troops—now on their way—while Pakistani troops stay put, brings into sharp focus the hesitancy of the government to press the Armed Forces into service in what our government calls a 'near-calamity area'. While this immeasurable disaster should have been tackled by our military government on a war footing, the unusual quiet in Islamabad and measured statements instead of action from the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces are plain distressing.

A peace-time army—unless the present interregnum in Pakistan is considered warlike—is also necessarily geared to tackle such tasks as relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. They are the only ones who are equipped and trained to go into instant action, as if with the push of a button, whether it is a mine explosion in England, a hurricane on the Florida coast, an earthquake in Turkey or the death of 29 persons in Manila in a cyclonic storm as recently as on November 18. But that is not to be so in Pakistan, more so if the disaster pertains to East Pakistan.

One hears of the reluctance of the civil administration in East Pakistan to call in the army to assist the administration in the provincial government. The civil government, after its first unpleasant brush with the adamant student fugitives in September last year, has been following the dictum that discretion is the better part of valour. They have been judicious enough in

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keeping the army out of the skirmishes arising out of student, labour and peasant agitations.

But this is no confrontation with the government. It is a much more gigantic confrontation with the foes of nature where the Armed Forces could be of immense support to the suffering humanity.

If the entire crisis boils down to the legalistic and procedural question of who will bell the cat, then, of course, the whole exercise seems pointless. But then such legalistic questions were thrown to the winds when it had come to the take-over of power twice in the last one and a half decade.

President Yahya has been stressing the point on many occasions that he is, above all, the Chief Martial Law Administrator and secondarily the President of the country. The assertion clearly underpins the character of the government and hence the obligations arising out of such a posture. Failure to meet such obligations can never be passed on to the civil administration which stays or quits at the pleasure of the central Martial Law authority.

Thus, the blame lies where it belongs. We know we do not have the right to question it. Yet we dare it for once.

Bengal nearing decisive hour

President Yahya's grand self-acquittal before an awe-struck congregation of national and international press turned out to be an exercise in equivocation. It was more of pontification interspersed with remonstrations addressed to the delinquent critics, rather than a substantive refutation of the charges.

Nevertheless, the political overtones of the President's emphatic statements were not to be missed by the discerning ears which are already filled with the thunder from the Maulana and the Sheikh. It appeared to me that the retraction of the first presidential broadcast of November 28, 1969, promising self-abnegation for the noble cause of unfettered democracy, was finally made when the President proclaimed his sovereignty over the proposed National Assembly and its subsequent exercise in the framing of a constitution. For the first time, the Legal Framework Order of March 28, 1970 was divested of its double entendres to drive home the rules of the elections game and the penalty for any constitutional misfeasance. The President said: 'If after the elections, they refuse to accept the LFO—an instrument of Martial Law—as far as I am concerned I will take it that they have not taken part in the elections. Martial Law continues and it shall continue.'

But surprisingly, this clear threat was preceded by the President's desire to grant maximum autonomy so that the people of East Pakistan could have 'full charge of their destiny, planning and utilisation of the resources' within, of course, the concept of Pakistan. Political observers interpret this dual strain in President Yahya's press statements as a feeler to Sheikh to share power

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in order to put a counter-weight on the surging wave of Bengali nationalism and dupe the gullible easterners with measured and, what the military government considers, adequate doses of autonomy.

On the other hand, the threat of the continuance of Martial Law is also being interpreted as a counter-threat to Sheikh's implied warning to go for a movement 'sacrificing the lives of another million'. After all, the prospects of integration may go to smithereens if Sheikh perchance follows Maulana and declares, 'Long Live East Pakistan.'

Such a highly ambivalent situation has put the Sheikh to a real test. He had said in his press conference to a questioner that he was not yet going for 'independence'. And one of his braintrust members also told the President jovially that he would 'not yet' like to adorn his advisory panel. This quizzical 'not yet' may be a pointer to the puzzle of a militant politics that tends to quiver and bend with the winds of fortune stirred by the politics of cyclone. Sheikh's reaction to the President's offer of either the carrot or the stick is thus being keenly watched by political circles. But the whimper of 'not yet,' that came as an anti-climatic epilogue to a thundering statement delivered at a moment of raging fury of a people battered and bruised by the worst calamity in its history, once again stamps the politics of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with a big question mark.

History beckons Sheikh Mujib

With the ethereal ascension from one intangible moment to another at midnight, December 31, the yester year of death and forbearance, of elections and victory has passed into the new era of nineteen seventy-one. Thus begins the yearly ritual of rekindling the wick of a distant hope put out every year by hunger and disease, war and repression, cyclone and apathy, disappointment and disillusionment. Humanity across the length and the breadth of the world becomes reawakened, as if in a golden moment of reincarnation.

Not that it really matters to the war in Vietnam, the now-commuted death penalty awarded to the Basque nationalists, the millions dead in the coastal belt of Bengal and the political prisoners rotting in the dungeons of captivity. Yet for once on this occasion, we give a damn to death and devilry, to colonial subjugation and neo-colonial exploitation, to imperialist wars and vicious machinations, to military oligarchy and bureaucratic authoritarianism.

This pledge to establish democracy on the New Year in the Gregorian calendar makes the task of the people all over the world, particularly in Pakistan and in the region of Bengal, all the more challenging and crucial. Standing, as we do, on the threshold of an ever-elusive democracy, the suffering masses of the country are looking up to their parliamentary leaders with keen expectation. But there is a difference that is writ large on their face since they have already seen through the clowning of democracy as enacted in the last 23 years.

Notwithstanding how our leaders had traded democracy with the privileges of power and bartered

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our existence for the pittance of a material bargain with indigenous and alien marauders, the verdicts this time have the accent of assertion by a people who refuse any more to be mystified by the magic of a name or the myth of a martyr. But habit dies hard with some of them who are apt to misconstrue an electoral verdict as the victory of a messianic cult.

The issues which are before the people are not merely a control over the resources and planning through the inadequate instrument of the six-points, but the right to expend the same in a productive manner for pulling up Bengal from the mire of economic regression. And that cannot be done without the slashing of a monstrous military budget. Otherwise, the mere control over the resources which have dwindled progressively over the last 23 years and the expropriation of the total pool of resources by an all-devouring establishment will leave East Pakistan with crumbs without the cake.

Contrarily, the proliferation of military establishments in the eastern wing simply for the generation of economic activities may only give us the false psychological satisfaction of getting even with West Pakistan in numerical strength within the frame of budgetary allocations. The institutional privileges remaining as they are, the question of West Pakistan's coming to terms with the six-points is inconsequential because they will be all too happy to retain their own resources through the same instrument of the six-points; and the East and the West will remain together happily ever after.

Hence, the issue of autonomy and the impressive slogan of financial control as spelt out in the six-point charter do not alter the picture, unless, of course, the order of priorities in the scheme of development is rearranged drastically and the defense spending is rationalised. The Awami League leadership seems pitifully inadequate to meet this challenge which it has invited upon itself without calculating the risks involved.

The studied silence of the Awami League leadership and its bevy of intellectual stringers on this vital issue is nothing unusual. While it has ridden the crest of Bengali nationalism only as a prop to share power in the statecraft, it is now at pains to adjust its six-points to one polity without obviously disturbing the status quo in the institutional expenditures. That is why the Lahore Resolution which formed the preamble to the six-points in 1966 is mentioned no more. They have travelled a long way from that day only to reaffirm their faith in one polity and in two economies, in federation rather than in confederation or even more than that.

This metamorphosis can be credited to some new entrants in the Awami League circles who are reputed to have excellent ties with the powers that be. The ascendancy of these people at the expense of some Awami League stalwarts and to the chagrin of its young nationalist radicals could be for two reasons: first, their expertise in certain constitutional and economic matters. And secondly, their use to serve as an effective pipeline between the Sheikh and the establishment. Whatever is the reason, the steady reversion in the Awami League posture in terms of emphasis on Bengali nationalism and the resultant strategy arising out of such a posture are all too apparent. It will be quite interesting to watch the reaction of the committed nationalists in the Awami League rank and file to this quantitatively the same but qualitatively different stance.

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ZAB commits political harakiri

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The self-proclaimed 'defender of the faithful' Zulfikar Ali Bhutto has not sought to absolve himself of any responsibility in the massacre of the innocents in Bengal.

All that he has to say after a week of conflagration in this part of the country is a terse dismissal of all the events as merely an 'unwarranted extreme reaction by the Awami League to the necessary postponement of the National Assembly.'

Ignorance is bliss, but hypocrisy can hardly pass for innocent indulgence in stupid verbiage. A man who needed the blood of hundreds of martyrs in West Pakistan to transform himself into a prophet of democracy from a serf of dictatorship should have been a little more cautious in flinging the ultimate insult to an awakened people. Obviously his newly-found mentors did not keep him properly informed, or Mr. Bhutto just did not care. Otherwise there cannot be any explanation for what history may record as the 'last famous words' of a man who acted as a catalyst for the disintegration of the country.

The Awami League's reaction to the postponement was possibly minimal. The angry crowd of thousands that waited outside Hotel Purbani when Sheikh Mujib announced his week-long programme of action (constitutional and democratic as the Sheikh described it) not only went back home disappointed, they were a surprised mass of humiliated men. Only Sheikh Mujib's charisma saved some of the lesser leaders of the Awami League from an open confrontation with them. Neither Sheikh Mujibur Rahman nor the

Awami League had prompted the hundreds of thousands of men, women and children to come out on the streets during the curfew hours.

Yet the same day Mr. Bhutto had to brag in Lahore that he had clean-bowled the Awami League with an outswinger. And no amount of gibberish now can absolve Mr. Bhutto of his responsibility in sending the country to a point of no return.

To put the record straight, he was asked at his Dhaka press conference whether he would be taking the people of West Pakistan into confidence about his dialogue with the Awami League. His reply was that the issue was too delicate to be broached in public, so he went for closed-door meeting with every conceivable political fog in West Pakistan, followed by a plethora of self-contradictory statements.

He promised in Dhaka that his dialogue with the Awami League was only the first in the series. He wanted the National Assembly to sit in the first week of March to allow him enough time to assess the political situation in West Pakistan. Yet it took only ten days before he thought that the dialogue was meaningless. He thought by coming to East Pakistan, he would be leaving his 'own people' to the mercy of a certain attack from India. It was not the administration, but this self-appointed conscience-keeper of the nation who talked about massing of Indian troops along West Pakistan borders. He went a step further and added, with what sounded like a vulgar exercise in self-justification, that the Indians had spared East Pakistan of their presence along the borders, very conveniently forgetting that a large number of Bengalees had been killed in the Batrigach enclave only a month before.

Mr. Bhutto over the past one month has been a man with many faces. He talked of safeguarding the integrity of Pakistan at any cost. Yet he would not come to East Pakistan because his partymen could not afford to be 'double hostages'. Holiday had warned him of the

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danger of such irresponsible statements not because Mr. Bhutto represented the bastions of power, but because in him it saw a man who had given a new direction to the people of at least two provinces in the West Wing.

It was expected that his professed love for the down-trodden in the other wing would reflect itself in his national politics. Instead he, intriguingly enough, after his visit to Lahore, chose a policy of confrontation between the people of the two wings. He was in a frantic mood to build his image in West Pakistan, particularly in some of the 'unconquered territory'. Political histrionics came handy in this old game of arousing people in West Pakistan against the people of Bengal to turn a controversial posture of strength into a massive support of the entire West Pakistani people. The hate campaign bore its fruit. Mr. Bhutto found overnight that he had become the undisputed leader in West Pakistan who could demolish any politician who dared defy his whip.

Obviously Mr. Bhutto has overstepped his limit and was playing happily into the hands of those who had long sought for a people-backed lackey in perpetuating them in cosy comforts of the bastions of power. If Mr. Bhutto's 'last famous words' sound like the whimper of a surprised man who has fallen a willing prey to an easy trap, he also possibly knows that once the confrontation in Bengal ends, he will be the natural choice for the second round in West Pakistan. Undoing something was easy if it was in somebody else's courtyard. Will it be the same in his home ground? If Bengal is denied its dignity, will a different code of human conduct apply to the down-trodden people of the four provinces of West Pakistan?

Bengal dishonoured again

Pointing an accusing finger at the people of Bengal who have been, and are still, being mowed down by the killer machine-guns of our 'brave and benign' army, the President of Pakistan and the Chief Martial Law Administrator, General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, staged another drama of self-acquittal from the charge of brutality and massacre, and announced the convening of the national Assembly on March 25, 1971 in a nationwide broadcast yesterday (Saturday).

The 'language of weapons' that reverberated throughout his ominous broadcast matched only too well the most cowardly onslaught on an unarmed population summarily described as 'the destructive forces drunk with lust for loot, arson and murder.'

The comical piety of an administration blaring the intent of a 'smooth transition to a democratic way of life' and simultaneously firing salvos of threat to Bengal and Bengal alone, only bared the aberrations of a monstrous establishment.

And they, who have led the people to this point of unreal expectations by halting their march through participation in the RTC '69 (Round Table Conference) and election '70, are trapped between the devil of an unmasked military establishment waiting to trigger off the guns on one hand, and the deep blue sea of the people surging forward in a tumult of total emancipation, on the other.

As if the final inquisition of the people of Bengal by our uniformed demigods, thriving on imperialist aid and seventy per cent of the country's resources, is not enough; as if the debt of conformism and constitutional

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illusions paid in the red blood of the gallant Bengalees, spilled over the last five days, nay the last 23 years, is going to be compensated by the holding of the Assembly at gunpoint and under cover of the Legal Framework Order.

Sheikh Mujib must decide now, or else he will be expelled from history.

The gap between the people's expectations and Awami League leadership's hesitant posture has already widened. The movement in Bengal is long past the limits of the six points and is not going to be retarded by skillful compromise. What was valid on March 3 without the postponement, is no longer so. It is fraught with the violence of resistance.

The hecatomb in Bengal, thus, has once again proved that 'violence like Achilles' lance can heal the wound it has inflicted.'

Notwithstanding our middle class morality and aversion to violence, the people who have laid down their lives in this orgy of mass killing shall recreate themselves as men who, driven to desperation, have found out the truth of the dictum: 'no gentleness can efface the mark of violence, only violence itself can destroy it.'

Today, Bengal's struggle has reached a pitch when spectacular measures of mass arrests, demonstration of armed might, display of lethal weapons and the showering of a rain of bullets do not any more scare the people back into their shells. Nor is the gospel of peace preached by the 'Gandhis' of our time going to be heard by the people.

The violence which has ruled over the ordering of a colonial society supplanted since independence by semi-colonial, semi-feudal and semi-capitalist exploitation and commandeered by imperialism, is now at the point of being taken over by those who have experienced it for centuries, the last twenty three years inclusive.

The man in the street 'has claimed the same violence, for he is the one who will ultimately decide to embody history in his own person and surge forward to assert his inalienable right to live honourably and impose the supremacy of his fallen class.'

The votaries of non-violence say that they are neither executioners nor victims. 'If violence began this very evening,' to quote Jean Paul Sartre, 'and if exploitation and oppression had never existed on this earth, perhaps the slogan of non-violence might end the quarrel. But if the whole regime, even your non-violent ideas, are conditioned by a thousand-year-old oppression, your passivity serves only to place you in the ranks of the oppressor.'

This fact of history must be considered while we determine the strategy of our present struggle. Let the will to die be carried to the logical end under a scientific leadership. Let us brace ourselves for the people's democratic struggle against national oppression of Bengal, coupled with a people's war on feudalism, capitalism and imperialism.

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They are not finished with you yet, Bengal

They might as well go for indiscriminate violence or genocide which literally means the total extermination of an intransigent people.

Anticipations of a settlement notwithstanding, the uneasy truce between Bengal and the military establishment of General Yahya Khan may finally turn out to be a deceptive stratagem of repressive violence. Faced as they are with a people's war, or at least the beginning of one, when they cannot isolate the fish from the sea, and when counter-insurgency techniques have failed to work, they might as well go for indiscriminate violence or genocide which literally means the total extermination of an intransigent people.

Their options are very limited. Either they withdraw completely from the soil of Bengal leaving the Bengalees to shape their own destiny, work out a solution which will not imperil the status quo as they view it or resort to the third course of brutal assault with their superior fire-power and organisation on an unarmed mass of rebellious populace.

The logistics of the Pakistan army point unmistakably to the third course unless, of course, they are compelled to withdraw from Bengal owing to the mounting pressures in their homeland, that is, West Pakistan.

The possibility of a settlement seems remote because even the acceptance of Sheikh Mujib's demands does not break the impasse. The fulfilment of the conditions does not yet ensure the participation of the majority party in the national Assembly. Any other formula designed to resolve the crisis may not be entertained at all by the constitutional leadership and the not-so-constitutional people of Bengal.

In fact, the alternative to a political settlement on Mujib's terms does not fit into the behavioural pattern of the present establishment. When they could have accepted the same prior to this crisis (that is, withdrawal of the martial law and transfer of power to the people's representatives),

why should they create conditions wherein they would be paying a higher price than their bidding?

The only logical explanation is that they are taking a long breath before plunging into an orgy of mass killing by trying to instil a false sense of security and achievement among the fighting populace now being led into the unknown by an inadequate and vacillating leadership.

History bears testimony to the fact that the warlords, as colonialists, as feudal landlords, as big bourgeoisie, are either part of the ruling class or the servants of rulers, who just do not give up economic and political power out of benevolent feelings for humanity. To expect that the same kind of establishment which could not even afford to wait for the 120th day of the NA (National Assembly) deliberations will now give Bengal everything on a platter in the face of universal hostility on this soil, is as illusory as the faith in electoral socialism.

Thus, the current euphoria over the stunning success of a non-violent civil disobedience movement in the absence of even the minimum of predicable governmental reaction may ultimately become counter-productive in the struggle for total emancipation.

After all, it is not hurting the army excepting that it may hurt its pride. But pride is only a dispensable sentiment to an army which does not even hesitate to shoot unarmed people from the rear.

It is now obvious that the struggle against repressive violence of an organised and determined army has got to be met by insurgent violence. As of today, it may not have the revolutionary leadership required to carry it to its logical goal. But then it is a patient and protracted struggle. And since the victory of the alien colonisers cannot be assured short of extermination of their enemies, that is, the united masses of Bengal, it is time to brace ourselves against such a danger which may be coming any day.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who has displayed an acute sense of history, must realise this danger and come out of the insidious trap laid by some of his educated(?) advisers whose bona fides are yet to be proved. He must choose between glory and power, and it is now or never.

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Regardless of constitutional footwork people's struggle continues

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The tremendous force of the people's indomitable will has swept aside the ditherings of a compromise-oriented politics initiated through RTC '69. While the non-violent non-cooperation movement of Awami League continues in the government offices, secretariat, mass communication media, educational institutions and other spheres barring the exempted ones, the city of Dhaka is ringing with the cry for national liberation. The issue is no longer the transfer of power or the six-points, but independence.

No wonder the middle class leadership of Bengal's rising bourgeoisie is now caught between the two fires of military brutality (suspended for the time being) and the all-encompassing people's democratic struggle against national oppression. And since the latter challenged the opportunism of a leadership that bends and quivers with the winds of fortune, a deal will have to be ultimately struck between the power-elite of West Pakistan and the nouveau-bourgeoisie of Bengal. Hence the brake on the movement in the name of non-violence and non-cooperation.

Over the week, the city of Dhaka has witnessed processions which have hardly demanded the fulfilment of the four conditions of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The slogans which rent the air with resounding echoes from all quarters demand absolute liberation. The demonstration launched in the city by the 'Bangla Charu and Karu Shilpi (artist) Sangram Parishad', the different student groups including Swadhin (free) Bangla Chhatra Sangram Parishad, writers and intellectuals, doctors and medical students, housewives and womenfolk, different trade unions and the like expressed in unmistakable terms their solidarity with the momentous struggle for national liberation.

Meanwhile, rural Bengal is preparing itself for a militant and protracted struggle under the leadership of the left radicals committed to a people's democratic order. Withdrawing themselves altogether from the petite-bourgeois environ of the urban areas, the left radicals have given a call to all classes of Bengalees to fight for the cause of national liberation. They have warned the people of the inevitable compromise that is in the offing to halt the momentous surge of the people's movement, which is not only aimed at routing the power elite of West Pakistan backed by imperialism, but also the aspirant bourgeoisie of Bengal to whom autonomy is the other name attached to the attempt to secure their privileges.

1971

Independence has come, the struggle continues

The staggering novelty of Bengal's war of independence lies as much in its stunning inception as in its spectacular success. For those who remain at the political fore, it was a fortuitous plunge from the level of academic talk-fest into the unknown terrain of violent struggle. It was never conceived by them to become a deliberate ascent from the simmering insurgency to the higher form of insurrectional struggle—leading to a patriotic people's war against national repression and forces of reaction.

Yet the Bengalees took to arms—some under force of circumstances and others with cool deliberation depending on the clarity of their objectives and strategy. And soon enough, the historical process of liberation was set in motion precedent to a political vanguard that was still enmeshed within what can be philosophically described as 'problematique' posed by dogmatic subjectivity.

The automatic transformation of the students, the youth, the workers and the peasants and the valiant patriots of the armed forces, the then EPR, and the police into the armed might of the people of Bengal within Bangladesh, and later, in the sanctuary of Indian soil, was a phenomenon totally unrelated to the elective political front, on the one hand, and the faction-ridden Marxist-Leninist parties committed to armed struggle for national liberation and people's democracy, on the other.

Doubtless, the parliamentary front, after the fashion of the Bangladesh government, proclaimed independence in Mujibnagar on April 17 last and assumed the charge of the onerous struggle for national

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independence on a political level. Similarly, the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary factions tried to mould the struggle into a people's war either in unison with the Mukti Bahini or separately with their armed cadres in their own peasant bases. But the course of armed struggle unfolded itself independently of the constitutional or extra-constitutional political leadership through its own dynamics. And hence the uniqueness of its inception.

Shortest but bloodiest: Similarly, the success of the struggle for independence is spectacular in many ways. It was one of the shortest, but also one of the bloodiest in history. It was bloodiest because the occupation army of General Yahya brutally cracked down on the whole people of Bangladesh. It has been a total attack on the people of Bangladesh—the climax of national repression by the West Pakistan military junta in alliance with the big bourgeoisie, feudals and their imperialist mentors.

It was the shortest struggle because the Indian people and their government (the reason being different in the latter's case) sympathised with the agony of Bangladesh, opened the border to the fleeing populace, helped train the valiant fighters of the Mukti Bahini and finally, forced the surrender of the Pak Army. And hence the spectacularity of the success and the novelty of the situation. The liberation of France by the allied forces, and Eastern Europe by the Red Army after World War occur as likely parallels. But then conditions were different, and so was the social basis of the struggle.

Armed revolutionary struggle encounters specific conditions on each continent, in each country; but these are neither natural nor obvious. And we had only the beginning of an armed struggle, the foetus of a revolution. In this historic task of liberation, the people of Bangladesh here have only achieved geographical independence, not national liberation. The struggle that was just about to begin is yet to unfold itself in its full vigour for the attainment of people's democracy.

New element: Independence has been won with the infusion of a new element apart from the bloody war waged by the Mukti Bahini. And this element is the total military and political support given by India, and the unstinted moral and political support extended by the Soviet Union. The reasons, however, are rooted in geopolitics, and not so much in political morality.

In fact, a popular parliamentary government has only been installed by our ally on the soil of Bangladesh after they vanquished the Pak Army in close cooperation with the fighting forces of the Mukti Bahini.

Thus, any claim to revolution by our leadership will be self-defeating at the moment.

Simultaneously, the foetus of revolution is very much alive. The struggle for liberation has only just begun. The inception of the armed guerrillas has already proved that it can emerge in spite of a political vanguard and sustain itself despite the constraints of alien control. The success of the same in future will once again prove that the guerrilla is the party in embryo.

The reasons, however, are rooted in geopolitics, and not so much in political morality.

They also fought

State of flux is the exact term that can describe the affairs of the newly independent Bangladesh.

Governmenting (coinage mine) is no exercise in rhetoric, nor is martyrdom a political argument. But the government of Bangladesh with its ornate crowd of bureaucratic functionaries is exactly suffering from an excess of both, while grappling with the strategy of governance.

Meanwhile, we have had one week of governance-in-absentia, since the fall of Dhaka at the hands of the allied forces of the Mukti Bahini and the Indian Army, and two and a half weeks of fitful trepidation in a vacuous situation. State of flux is the exact term that can describe the affairs of the newly independent Bangladesh.

Perhaps, it is a little harsh to say so, or perhaps impatience is getting the better of our judgement. But such an impression does percolate down to the broad spectrum of the masses, notwithstanding the unique prestige the government enjoys after having ridden the crest of a heroic war of independence.

The government's or its functionaries' claims to revolutionary rhetoric and hallowed martyrdom are not the points at issue. But their near-psychopathic obsession with their own virtues to the exclusion of the trapped humanity in the occupied territory of Bangladesh during nine nightmarish months since March 25, 1971, betrays the extent of their inebriation with the brew of power.

The summary rejection of those who chose not to go across despite the danger of extermination by the occupation army of Yahya and their collaborators, and who consequently suffered with the rest of the populace, is symptomatic of an unfortunate trait. It also points to their faulty understanding of the nature of the crackdown

and consequent genocide in occupied Bangladesh by Yahya's bigoted marauders.

The final and deadly thrust of Yahya's junta on the people of Bangladesh signalled the climactic point of national repression. It was a total attack on the people, and not a selective onslaught on a section of people or a particular political party.

The strategy of Yahya's crackdown was skillfully planned and they decided on genocide only after they could not isolate the 'fish from the sea' and realised that the entire people were their enemy. Prior to their final thrust, they tried counter-insurgency measures to stem the rot in what they vauntedly described as the 'ideology and the territorial integrity of Pakistan.'

When it failed to arrest the march of national liberation, they resorted to the bluff of a "dialogue" in order to take a long breath before plunging into an orgy of mass-killing. Genocide was the ultimate answer to Yahya because he failed to find collaborators whom the Pakistani ruling clique had always used in the past to contain the aspirations of the Bengali nation through the preaching of communal politics.

Minority: Against this backdrop, the claim to inheritance of independence cannot be the exclusive privilege of the in-crowd of migrant politicians and civilians. It will only help create a wedge between the minority elite from Mujibnagar and Calcutta, and the majority people within Bangladesh.

Some of the administrative actions relating to the functioning of the government machinery betray an indecent haste as if jobs are more important than running an administration for an interim period until weeding out of 'collaborators in the officialdom' can be done.

But six and a half crores of people, who stayed behind, cannot be collaborators, nor was the entire officialdom a party to the doings of a demonic regime. But unfortunately, the same attitude is being displayed by our 'revolutionary' bureaucrats of the new

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government in all spheres of the administration, in mass media, and some of the financial institutions. No one discounts their sacrifice. Yet conversion of sacrifice into the profit of jobbery is an unpardonable crime.

Lack of foresight: The government that was proclaimed in Mujibnagar has been operative, at least theoretically, since April 1971. While they should have foreseen the eventuality of independence, they ought also to have done some homework both on a short and long term basis in the event that they were to be put on the saddle of power earlier than their own schedule. That they did very little that could be called their own, is obvious from the fact that our government has to borrow each and every scheme, each and every piece of advice from India, even for the primary task of running the administration at the district levels.

Could not they have spared India of such rudimentary tasks by showing a little charity to their fellow beings in the administrative cadre?

On the other hand, the lukewarm attitude of the government to the real menace of Jamaat-e-Islami and al-Badar who are regrouping for a clandestine anti-national conspiracy with the active backing of their imperialist mentors, has shocked everyone beyond measure. While it should have been taken up as a matter of top priority for ensuring the security of the new state of Bangladesh, the government is yet to take any concrete measure regarding this danger.

It is time for the government to decide on the priority and set their perspectives right. Profusion of revolutionary rhetoric may satisfy their personal egos, but not the people. Expropriation of jobs and properties can wait. It is, after all, an interim government in the absence of President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Shouldn't some of them wait until he arrives and meanwhile act with restraint and a modicum of decency?

Economic policy going haywire

Administrators have never been as numerous as they are in Bangladesh today. The appointment of these administrators was stated to have been necessitated by the vacuum created in enterprises under an absentee Pakistan management.

It was done under a Presidential fiat issued by the former Acting President providing for virtual take-over of such establishments, without however, any reference to ownership. The measure was purported to have been taken to reactivate the economy, and to immediately cover the legal lacunae involved in the running of the same.

This ad-hoc arrangement has, however, been fraught with a number of tricky legal and functional problems which inhered in the measure itself, and the application thereof. While it took exactly fifteen days of frantic deliberations to reopen the banks which constitutes perhaps the most important prerequisite for reactivating the economy, not much of progress could be discerned in the banking sector over the last twenty-five days. Because, the arrangement was apparently a convenient sidestepping of the fundamentals without any forethought (or even an after-thought) of the rationale which should set the pattern of economic revival despite the strains, and the extenuating circumstances. Such an assumption seems preposterous; but there has been no tangible proof to the contrary.

Whatever results have flowed from the tentative appointment of administrators at the helm of the banks are certainly not commensurate with the urgency of the situation. This is primarily because the fiscal policy is

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yet to be determined, and the monetary structure has not been worked out. On the other hand, there has been a strain on the reserve of the banks without any resultant improvement at the receiving end.

To get back to the legal and functional problems on which the banking system is about to flounder, the administrators cannot yet be described as the *de jure* management. The government should have by now defined the *de jure* management of these banks to enable them to function as legally constituted corporate bodies. Unless this aspect is taken care of, it will not be possible for these banks to maintain even the status quo in the eye of law in the discharge of banking function. The legal question of ownership cannot be brushed aside simply by lending semi-permanency to what should have otherwise been a stop-gap arrangement. After all, the banks have not been recommissioned merely to allow withdrawal of deposits, but also to inject a shot of health into the arm of a paralysed economy. If the banks are to perform their decisive and vital role in the reconstruction of the shattered economy, the banks have to be reorganised with proper management at their helm as legally constituted corporate bodies.

Related to the above is the status of the business houses and industrial institutions, whose management has been taken over, and in which the government is represented through administrators of its own choice. Assuming the banks are reorganised on a legal footing, the necessary financing of such establishments may come up against serious hurdles as investment of depositors' funds into these channels may not be deemed judicious on account of the latter's untenable position in the eye of law.

Even if the question of legality of the status of the banks, and industrial and business enterprises, under absentee ownership, is circumvented on the strength of governmental authority as vested in the

administrators, financing does not yet seem feasible under the circumstances. It is here that the role of the Bangladesh Bank, which has taken over the functions of the former State Bank, calls for close scrutiny. It is a pity that the first-ever public prescription of the Bangladesh Bank regarding banking transactions is a puerile exercise in irrelevancy. There has been no mention as to how finances would be made available to industries and trading houses in order to give them the necessary boost rather than state the obvious, with a somewhat misplaced wisdom: 'Loans for cars would not be allowable under the new circumstances.'

Anyway, the most convenient way to bypass such criticism is to refer to the short supply of currency. But so far as available information goes, bank notes and coins in Bangladesh, to the tune of approximate Rupees/Tks 250 crores, are available. A disbursement of the above quantum of currency would have been adequate to revive as many industries as possible, on the basis of priority. If all the industries and trading houses could not be covered with the available supply of currency notes and coins, revival of other sectors could have been phased out with the Bangladesh bank guaranteeing the credit to the banks for financing particular sectors for an interim period until a comprehensive fiscal policy becomes operative and new currency notes are available. It is reported that the Bangladesh Bank has already deliberated on this matter and decided to provide Rs.56 crores with an initial amount of Tk.20 crore as loan to the banks to facilitate credit to the jute sector. But this decision is yet to be reflected in the actual banking practices unless one has the necessary political pull.

The Bangladesh Bank is obviously suffering from lack of expertise owing to the absence of some top central bankers like Dr. A.K.N. Ahmed, Mr. Gangopadhaya, Mr. Aminul Huq Chowdhury and Dr. A.K.M. Siddique. They are trapped in Karachi and awaiting repatriation.

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Yet, the new Governor Mr. A.N. Hamidullah could easily have requisitioned the services of such Central bank personnel like Mr. Sulaiman Chowdhury or Mr. Nurul Matin or even such old hands as Mr. Z. Huq to give the organisation a definite shape and obtain the know-how required for formulating the fiscal policy to reactivate the industries on an emergency basis. While this has not been done, the Bangladesh Bank has further been debilitated by the exit of Mr. M. Saleheen whose services have been placed at the disposal of a scheduled bank as its Managing Director.

While the above is a run-down on the legal and organisational aspect of the banks and the central bank, consider the functional problems following the appointment of administrators in some of the scheduled banks under absentee ownership. Functional problems have not occurred in banks, where seniormost personnel in charge of the institution had been vested with the authority of an administrator by the government, like that of the Muslim Commercial bank and the Standard Bank. Even in the case of lesser banks like the Commerce Bank and Australasia Bank, appointment of administrators from outside has not disrupted the normal pace of banking business. But the imposition of National Bank personnel on two of the big banks, under absentee ownership, despite the availability of senior executives within the institutions, has put these financial institutions totally out of gear. This has been glaringly evident in one of the two banks referred to. It is alleged that the new administrator who suffers from all the inhibitions of a national bank functionary has totally reversed the normal banking practices allowable under the changed circumstances and introduced red tapism of the worst possible kind in dealing with individual cases and even with those of officials and employees. Consequently, the officers of the bank had no recourse but to form an officers' association to safeguard their employment interest against the brazenly authoritarian attitude of the Administrator.

What special consideration led to the selection of National Bank personnel as administrators, even in cases where Administrators could have been found from within the banks under reference, is a question that intrigues many. But being kept in the dark is nothing new to the people of Bangladesh because the pattern seems to be repeated in all spheres, governmental and extra-governmental. Isn't it time for us to stop wondering about such issues now?

But the question remains: should the administration of the country's finances remain as tentative and tenuous as they are today? The banks and industries cannot be run by decree or directives as was done during the non-cooperation movement of March 1971. It is one thing to paralyse the economy, it is another to reactivate it.

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Sixty-five million collaborators?

It is symptomatic of the aberrations of a twisted psyche, and hence an unpardonable offense against the majority of silent sufferers by a minority of freaks.

The TV and the radio are today faced with an acute famine of performing artistes consequent upon the summary banning of those who had appeared on the TV screen or lent their voices on the air during the nine months of terror and genocide in occupied Bangladesh. The embargo was reportedly imposed by some functionaries of the Ministry of Information who zealously branded them as collaborators of the occupation regime of Yahya.

The excommunication of the defenseless artistes from the holy communion of patriots, and the incidence of high-handedness by some Swadhin Bangla Radio personnel over some respected artists like Abdul Ahad and Abdul Latif have come as a rude shock to many. A similar attitude has also been displayed by our nouveau-patriots in other spheres, where they merrily bludgeoned their helpless victims with their perverted judgement.

The rationale offered by these people in support of such brazen actions, which often smack of professional jealousies and personal animosities, is a curious blend of egotism and spite, and self-glorification. It is symptomatic of the aberrations of a twisted psyche, and hence an unpardonable offense against the majority of silent sufferers by a minority of freaks.

This has naturally resulted in a crisis of confidence between the civilians who sought refuge across the border and those who had to stay, perforce to live through the agony and misery of nine long and interminable months. And this has been due to the exaggeration by the former of their role in the liberation struggle in the safe recluse of Calcutta or Mujibnagar in

total negation of the suffering millions trapped inside the territory of occupied Bangladesh.

While the above does not apply to those who have really fought with arms and the saner elements among the civilian refugees, this strain seems to have vitiated the social, political and cultural life in Bangladesh.

Context of struggle: The context of the struggle for national independence and economic emancipation in Bangladesh is not as recent as that of the period between March 25, 1971 and December 16, 1971. In fact, this period was the high watermark in our struggle against national repression which began exactly 25 years ago.

Hence, the record of the last 24 years, and not merely the nine months, will have to be taken into consideration in determining the bona fides of each and every individual case. Just as one does not become a collaborator by merely attending the office or performing for the radio or the TV under duress over the nine black months, one cannot also quash one's guilt of the past 24 years by merely crossing over the border and turning into a glorified refugee.

Collaboration is a political term and it has got to be defined politically. A collaborator is one who on his/her own volition helps in the scheme of the regime, who agrees with the political, cultural and economic blueprint of the rulers and assists the government machine in all its anti-people and repressive measures for the perpetuation of alien interests.

Judged in this context, only the anti-national elements belonging to the hated Jamaat-e-Islami, Muslim League and other communal parties and their cadres in the administration, educational institutions, business world and other spheres, and the linguistic but pampered minority population of Bangladesh, are the collaborators of the occupation regime. The rest of the population put up either active or passive resistance against the demonic occupation army wherever they lived.

One cannot also quash one's guilt of the past 24 years by merely crossing over the border and turning into a glorified refugee.

Artistes like Abdul Latif, Abdul Ahad, Abdul Alim, Ferdousi Rahman and scores of others have always been with the people of Bangladesh.

To repeat what has been stated in our earlier reports, genocide is committed only when the rulers treat the entire people as their enemy. The Bengalees were the enemies of Yahya regime by the time it was March 25, 1971, and hence each Bengalee was a suspect in the eye of the government. If collaborators were found in abundance, the regime would not have had to import West Pakistani police, West Pakistan civil servants, West Pakistani programme producers in the TV and the Radio to run the civil administration.

Patriotism: Going back to the question of the performing artistes, the functionaries of the Ministry of Information have no right to question their patriotism. If some of them had appeared on the TV or performed over the radio, they had done so under compelling circumstances and at gunpoint.

Did they not play their glorious part in the struggle for emancipation and national independence during the past 24 years? Did they not inspire the nation with their resonant voices and music, with their enactment of patriotic plays and dramas during the month of March at the call of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman? If they have done so, the authorities concerned must take that into consideration.

Artistes like Abdul Latif, Abdul Ahad, Abdul Alim, Ferdousi Rahman and scores of others have always been with the people of Bangladesh. Any sinister attempt to blacken their names will be resisted by the people. With liberation, they—like the rest of the six and a half crores of people—have broken their chains. The era of slavery and forced labour is gone now and they are free to sing the songs of freedom to enthrall the millions all over this golden land.

It has been reported that the Ministry of Information has set up 'a screening committee' to clear or ban the performing artistes for the TV and the radio. This is an affront to the entire community of performing artistes. They have earned their inalienable right to earn

a living as patriots without having to establish their bona fides before a committee of glorified refugees. And this principle should apply to every sector of our national life.

The community of artistes should for once rise to the occasion and fight it out to the last. If one of them is victimised by the officials, they should prefer starvation to humiliation.

Respect has always been denied to our performing artistes. They should earn it the hard way.

It is ironic that when the real collaborators are still at large and some of them have been rehabilitated with honour, witch-hunting of defenseless officials and artistes has become the favourite pastime for some of our own people in the administration. The people have earned their freedom. No one has any right to deny it to them.

Collaborator: Let us be clear that reporting to office under strict government orders, attending schools and colleges at gunpoint, receiving citations from Yahya for no initiative of one's own, performing for the TV and the radio under threat of dire consequences, and earning a living for oneself and one's family are not measures of collaboration. If that be so, six and a half crores of Bengalees are collaborators and they are proud to remain collaborators, if the government will.

Bangladesh, during the nine months of occupation, was like a vast concentration camp where government officers and employees, teachers of schools and colleges, industrial workers and artisans, intellectuals and artistes were compelled to go on forced labour like slaves in chains. They could neither breathe nor talk freely, awaiting penalty and death with each passing moment. Yet they fought bravely and silently, paying a heavy toll in terms of lives and properties until they were delivered by our gallant freedom fighters from the tyranny of Yahya, and his marauding troops and political collaborators.

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There must be many more people like the above-mentioned ones whose patriotism should not be questioned

Let us cite some instances to drive some sense into the head of the zealous patriots—the glorified refugees who fled this country. Sardar Fazlul Karim who was forced to sign the statement of 54 intellectuals singing panegyrics for the regime was taken into custody by the same regime. Munir Chowdhury, a signatory, was deemed to be too dangerous by the collaborators of Yahya to be kept alive.

This does not mean that all the rest of the signatories come under the same category. But there must be many more people like the above-mentioned ones whose patriotism should not be questioned merely on the basis of an isolated action without reference to the total situation and certainly the past 24 years.

Muktis shamefully neglected

The arms which were so potent in bringing about the rout of the occupation forces in Bangladesh have suddenly become redundant and, with them, the thousands of young Muktis, as they are universally known today. They were told that their work was over and so was the use of their weapons. They were asked to lay down their arms at the feet of their great leader or else be outlawed.

Some have acquiesced and some have not. Meanwhile, surrender of arms has turned out to be one of the most popular ceremonies in Bangladesh.

Speaking honestly, the term Mukti is an anathema today to most people in Bangladesh. Thanks to our political leadership, all arms have been declared contraband, without any show of respect and honour to the human material which wielded them. This is the reward the fighters got for fighting a bloody war of independence.

Worse still is the unfortunate equation of our fighting youth with the handful of armed looters and known thugs now having a field-day under the very nose of an indulgent administration. Never before in the history of any resistance movement anywhere in the world did the fighting elements receive such a bad name.

It is not unusual that arms, whether legal or contraband, tend to be dangerous in the hands of the young and the impressionable. But the emphasis on disarming the Muktis right after December 16, 1971 betrayed an indecent haste born seemingly out of a fear-psychosis on the part of our political leadership. The constant harping on this aspect created an impression

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that possession of arms by the Muktis is as reprehensible as possession of those by anti-social elements.

Resultantly, the arms which brought us freedom came to be looked upon with fear and suspicion and the Muktis were painted in the image of a trigger-happy irresponsible lot.

Surrender of arms is not synonymous with dispossession of arms which, in fact, were used to free Bangladesh. The same band of boys who risked their lives for nine long months combating the far superior forces of the Pak army are today baffled by this strange turn of history.

They feel that they have been robbed of their power without being accorded the slightest recognition for what they have done to liberate their motherland. Thus they have no sense of belonging to the present nor of any participation in the current phase of post independence affairs.

Sanction to kill dissenters

When the Prime Minister orders the police to shoot at sight 'Naxalites' and that too in a mammoth public meeting, no higher legal sanction is required to endorse political killing at the state level. Whatever may have caused the chilling outburst of the patriarch of Bangladesh pertains, perhaps, to the domain of the subconscious. But on the surface of it, such words point unmistakably to the sense of 'inviolability' of the established order, which is in no mood to meet the challenge of political opposition according to the rules of the game.

Thus the police force, which has tasted blood for the first time since independence outside the premises of the Intercontinental Hotel on Thursday morning, may now train their newly-acquired automatics on their chosen victims without having to justify the establishment killings.

The implications of the Prime Minister's chilling threats cannot be missed even by the most benign of all political observers. Since a Naxalite is not necessarily a distinguishable creature from the rest of the famished Bangalees, any political dissenter can be branded so, and gotten rid of physically by the policemen's bullet, at the instance of the political leadership holding suzerain power.

The impact of such statements on a polity, which is still suffering from a tremendous imbalance consequent upon the armed convulsions of nine long months, can also be disastrous. It will only take the lid off the boiling cauldron and unleash the forces into the open and thereby turn Bangladesh into an arena of political murders.

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If there are agents of imperialism inside Bangladesh and saboteurs of the four main objectives of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, they are within the very fold of the ruling party.

On the other hand, the induction of the police into politics of killing by the political government, as has been done in the past by the rulers and exploiters of Bangladesh, will only mean that our leadership has not learnt even the elementary lesson from history.

Conspiracy theme: The tendency of the political government in Bangladesh and its leadership to consign all the ills in the administration, the economy and the polity, to conspiracy is also quite pronounced. The conspiracy theme has become a common diversion from the problems and issues which are often creations of some elements in the government.

It has now become virtually an act of sedition to talk about these problems. Even criticisms of government's doings in respect of trade relations, foreign relations and defense strategies, or even innocuous suggestions in these regard, are viewed inimically by the established order and its leaders.

It will only be in the fitness of things that the government should clean its own stables before talking about the *mala fide* intentions of others. If there are agents of imperialism inside Bangladesh and saboteurs of the four main objectives of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, they are within the very fold of the ruling party. By ordering the police to shoot 'Naxalites' and threatening every blessed soul outside the orbit of the Awami League, particularly those belonging to the left, the government will only expose the real face of Fascism which seems to be lurking behind the facade of the ruling party.

My rejoinder to the Times report

The following is the letter sent to The Times, London, contradicting a statement attributed to me by the Delhi Correspondent of the newspaper.

Mr. Peter Hazelhurst, your correspondent in Delhi, in his news despatch entitled 'Bangladesh approaches the brink of disaster' (The Times, date March 27, 1972), has quoted me in connection with press freedom in Bangladesh. I have no intention to refute the contention of the news story which, I am sure, is based on the findings of your correspondent and his assessment of the objective conditions obtaining in free Bangladesh. But the quotation attributed to me is certainly not a fair and correct representation of what I had told him in response to his queries.

I have very strong and quite open views on the freedom of the Press or the lack of it in Bangladesh today. Years of servitude under the moghuls of the information empire of the Pakistani era has stymied the press which, even in the absence of official censorship, is embarrassingly loyal to the powers that be. This self-imposed censorship, however, is no index of the government's catholicity towards press criticism. On the other hand, apart from bringing home the servility of the Press, it is a telling commentary on the political climate obtaining in the country. Without going into the deprecatory aspect of governmental reaction to Holiday's forthright criticism, I would like to state here that in my discussion with Mr. Peter Hazelhurst I was only talking of certain deterrents which might restrain those in the government, who were, and are still thinking of penalising Holiday or me in person, from adopting

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any irrational or rash measures either legal or extra-legal. But I never said, 'I sent a message to the Sheikh warning him that there was no monopoly of arms today and that if anything happened to me I would be avenged'. I categorically deny having said these words involving the Prime Minister which amounts to the use of what is known as the language of weapons.

Nevertheless, I stand by my conviction in the righteousness of the cause I and many others in Bangladesh stand for. I do not suffer from any martyr complex nor from persecution phobia. Holiday as the fearless journal of opinion will continue to serve the new-born nation notwithstanding intimidation and threats. Let not patriotism be denigrated to such a lowly level as that of a tool for political witchhunt. We shall live and die for Bangladesh as patriots and patriots only.

Note: The article which was front-paged in London Times under the by-line of Peter Hazelhurst had a restraining effect on AL black-shirts. What I had told Peter in response to his anxious query as to whether all the threats of blue murder were not scaring me is as follows: If anything happens to me, I shall be avenged.

Liberation forces disowned?

Of late a spate of resignations, and requests for release from active service, by a number of senior and junior cadres in the Bangladesh Armed Forces is taking place. Understandably, these reports have caused little stir outside the closed ranks of whatever defense organisation we have inherited from the days of liberation struggle. Confirmation of the news of the reported resignations and requests for release from service is difficult to obtain. But any evidence to the contrary is also hard to come by. Whatever the truth, the patriotic soldiers who had formed the liberation army in those uncertain days of armed resistance in March 1971 against the highly sophisticated military machine of Yahya, are the most frustrated lot in Bangladesh today. Added to them are the hundred thousand guerrillas who constituted the FF (Freedom Fighters) under the command of the liberation army known as the BDF (Bangladesh Defence Force).

The frustration among the cadres of the liberation army could not have arisen out of a mere sense of deprivation as some will have us believe. Nor is it the manifestation of unfulfilled ambitions in terms of military awards or political power. It is more due to attitudinal factors which have led to the alienation of these patriotic elements from our much-vaunted revolutionary polity. Most potent of the factors are the political and bureaucratic prejudices towards the man behind the gun, more so when the men in question have fought a patriotic war at the bidding of their own conscience in response to the call to liberate the motherland. And as

The patriotic soldiers who had formed the liberation army in those uncertain days of armed resistance in March '71 against the highly sophisticated military machine of Yahya, are the most frustrated lot in Bangladesh today.

The proceedings of armed resistance during the first phase of our liberation were those of an uncoordinated military effort without any political vanguard.

he was fighting, with the people and for the people, he surely would undergo some degree of politicisation owing to the nature of the struggle which had started as mere armed resistance and was about to develop into a people's war.

The prejudice of the political leadership towards the cadres of the liberation army ranges from fear of the potency of arms to deeply ingrained distrust of their political ambition. While the first kind of prejudice is directly related to the degree of politicisation of the man-in-arms consequent upon his involvement in a national democratic revolution, the second kind of prejudice has its roots in history, particularly in the traumatic experience of our political leadership with the undiluted military dictatorship of the Pakistan regime and the emergence of a monstrous military oligarchy in the then Pakistan.

To elaborate, notwithstanding the contradictory claims as to who had proclaimed independence and when, the armed resistance to the calculated genocide carried out by the Pak Army was a fortuitous military event of fantastic dimensions by the patriotic Bengali officers and jawans of the Pakistan Army, the then EPR and the police in Chittagong, Joydebpur, Mymensingh, Jessore, Comilla, Pabna, Barisal and other places all over Bangladesh. Dhaka was possibly the only exception where despite the presence of the political leadership, the population was caught unawares. Resistance was put up, as if in isolation, by the police in Rajarbagh, and the EPR in Peelkhana, and withered away after a momentary flicker. The proceedings of armed resistance during the first phase of our liberation were those of an uncoordinated military effort without any political vanguard.

It, however, found a political mooring in the provisional government of People's Republic of Bangladesh proclaimed on April 17, in Mujibnagar in Meherpur, Kushtia. But by then it was a self propelling

war of independence tenuously led from the Theatre road (Calcutta) precincts of the provisional government and of the Commander-in-Chief. The natural corollary to this unique development resulted in a credibility-gap between civilian government—sitting pretty in Calcutta—on the one hand and the Mukti Bahini cadres fighting a desperate guerrilla warfare, on the other. It is thus only natural that the political leadership, which suffered from a kind of equivocation before March 25, 1971 on the question of national independence, would be wary of the men-in-arms who committed themselves to the cause of national liberation with the first bullet they fired against the enemy, that is, the Pak Army. And this commitment was total because there could be no going back once the die was cast.

The second kind of prejudice as indicated before is of historical nature. The ingrained suspicion of the ascendancy of an army in politics, as happened in Pakistan over the last twenty four years, is once again having its sway over the political leadership. As a result, right from the beginning, there has been a marked tendency on the part of our political leadership to underplay the role of the Bangladesh Defense Force and the guerrillas in the war of liberation. The present composition of the Armed Forces is distasteful to most of them as it may not just be as easily pliable to any kind of political dictate or use. To have such a prejudice against the patriotic elements of the Bangladesh Forces is to deny them the right of being proud fighters in a patriotic people's army.

Coupled with political prejudices is the bureaucratic prejudice, which again is born out of the two reasons mentioned and elaborated above.

It is in this background that we have to read the frustration among the senior and junior cadres of the liberation army. Their frustration, which is finding vent in their voluntary resignations, has gone deeper because

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of total callousness of the political leadership to their entity. Instances are plentiful of the boys, who fought valiantly in the war, being kicked around without the slightest consideration. The names of all top fighters in the struggle are no longer to be heard. Some have been pushed to oblivion just because they do not fit into the leadership's concept of an army man. Thus while our bureaucrats who had joined the provisional government across the border have been pushed up ten rungs in the career-ladder, the military leaders are being cut down to size unless, of course, they are willing to conform.

Tilt towards fascism growing more pronounced

The obsession of our political leadership with conspiracies and their Quixotic sabre-rattling against the windmill of the ultraleft have by now become psychopathic. Not a day passes without some kind of verbal mystification in the shape of oracular pronouncements from a saintly Establishment, as well as the most banal threats to the inadvertent sinner who cannot bear the sickening headlines in the nationalised press any more than his wretched existence.

Between the rhapsody of self-glorification and the outpouring of vengeful anger on the 'secret adversaries', the people are being administered the most absurd kind of socialist dosage amidst a spree of plunder and loot, corruption and favouritism, expropriation and jobbery. And all this is being done with unruffled equanimity and total impunity in the name of 'socialism'.

But this is no mental quirk nor any psychological flaw in our 'incorruptible' rulers. There is an element of conscious design in all that is being said and done and all that is still to be said and done. Already overt attempts are being made to equate the government with the state and the nation, to be followed by such simple equations as government-state-nation-party-leader. Or shall we call it the latencies which lurk within the party claiming to represent the 'whole nation' for a mad thrust to perpetuate the hold of the privileged political elite in a totalitarian fashion to the exclusion of the working class, the peasantry, the broad gamut of the middle and the lower middle classes.

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expropriations range from the sublime to the ridiculous, viz, houses, buildings, business establishments, cars, printing presses, cigarette-agencies, kerosene-distributorship, gas-stations, import licences, export trade and finally offices of profit—is in direct proportion to the sense of deprivation that each one of these expropriators suffered over the past twenty-four years. It has become what someone described as 'of cannibalistic dimensions'. This is what in political history is known as the foetus of fascism—an oppositionless society propped up with the instruments of terror, designed over the years and fed by anti-capitalist slogans.

One may be accused of cynicism for reading too much into the present situation or the mental processes of a leadership given to an excess of self-adulation. But let us consider some of the symptoms which may lead to the political gangrene called fascism, and weigh those on the scale of the present day political psychoses of the ruling party and its various wings.

The class-selfishness of the new elite of expropriators (in the absence of a well-entrenched bourgeoisie, this new class of property-owners will emerge in Bangladesh through grabbing of properties in the manner mentioned before) having an enormous political stake in the state-power is 'a far cry from the laissez faire preached by capitalism in the era of revolutionary dynamism'. It will deny any competition that may pose a challenge to its absolute right to expropriate economically, and its will to stay in the hub of political power. Since this new class exclusively belongs to the party in power, or is the product of political patronage, it will necessarily have a firm toehold in the government, and will strengthen itself by aligning itself with the new bureaucracy that will emerge on the crest of 'nationalisation'.

The denial of competition encompasses all fields. 'Even the competition between legal and loyal political parties to serve the bourgeois is denied. Instead Fascism

attempts by attacks on the Right, as well as on the Left, to wipe out all opposition. That is why the coming to power by fascism is preceded, not only by the assaults on organisations of the toiling masses but also mutual, severe and often bloody struggle within the fascist camp'.

In Bangladesh, the hypersensitivity of our political government to even legal opposition is already pronounced, as is evidenced from the daily histrionics of the government leaders and their scores of mouthpieces. The target is unmistakably the vocal left. The Right parties like the Jamaat-e-Islami, Muslim League and their kind have lost their potency with the weakening of communal politics. But such terms as Razakar and Al-Badr are still the most oft-repeated obscenities which the leadership hurl at the opposition. While the resurgence of fanaticism may not be possible, the right will reappear within the ruling party without a contender in the political arena.

There is, however, a very interesting aspect which needs mention here. The armed fanatics of the Jamaat-e-Islami and such other anti-national elements belonging to similar other religio-political groups have not been sought out by the party in power either by default or by design. The top leadership of the Al-Badr and the Jamaat-e-Islami are either still at large or were allowed to get lost or go underground. The efforts of the 'Buddhijibi Nidhan Tathyanusandhan Committee' of which Zahir Raihan was the convenor, and the author of this article a sponsor member, to induce the government machinery to take effective measures against the possible regrouping of these elements, went practically in vain. Zahir Raihan had to pay with his life for playing the dangerous game of sleuthing, and the committee had to abandon its work in the face of total indifference of the political government.

Since the ire of the fanatics and their annihilation programme were primarily directed against the left, as

The top leadership of the Al-Badr and the Jamaat-e-Islami are either still at large or were allowed to get lost or go underground.

While fascism advances up the ladder of such equations as government-state-nation-party-leader, the new class of expropriators find a better tool among the centrists to carry out their designs.

the list of victims and those who escaped it testify, one certainly has to ponder over this issue.

While fascism advances up the ladder of such equations as government-state-nation-party-leader, the new class of expropriators finds a better tool among the centrists to carry out their designs. They are the best bet since they appear less reactionary than the others and their anti-capitalist slogans carry a truer ring. In the absence of other contenders for political power, the new class of expropriators will appear only through the ruling party in Bangladesh. They will also find effective allies among the loyal opposition parties like the Bangladesh Communist Party and the NAP(M), as long as it suits their master, that is, the Soviet Union, in getting even with the revolutionary left. But this is only a temporary alliance because someday even these loyal oppositionists may incur the displeasure of their ruling partner.

The difference between ordinary bourgeois dictatorship and fascism is that while ordinary dictatorship generates terror through the machinery of the state, police and the military—the fascists must employ a section of the people, armed and violent, to subdue the rest of the population. The police and the military are reduced to the secondary function of protecting the fascist hordes.

It may be a sweeping generalisation to brand one or the other Bahini having loyalty to the Awami League as fascistic but the chances of such Bahinis turning into a fascist horde cannot be ruled out. On the other hand, the compulsions, which have necessitated the raising of such Bahinis (Lal Bahini, for instance) outside the fold of the government by one or the other wing of the ruling party, are not mere sport. They will have to have an objective—the objective of aiding and protecting counter-revolution unleashed by the new class of expropriators. Since the loyalty of the Bahini will be rooted in the government formed by its own party, which

in turn will be dominated by this new class of exploiters, it will be set upon the democratic and left opposition in the name of operation-catharsis. The public utterances of the leaders of the Lal Bahini already confirm this suspicion and they may be viewed as an omen that disaster can befall the non-conformists, particularly the left opposition sooner or later.

Does it cause embarrassment to the political leadership? So far the people have had no indication of the same. On the contrary, the obvious impression that one gets from the screaming headlines in the controlled press is that the leadership gloats over such crass demonstration of muscle-power, which they hope, will put the fear of God into the heart of the critics. But will this really work? We intend to do a bit of hypothetical exercise on that too in the next issue.

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Storm troopers poised for attack on Left

'Operation Tongi' signals the lighting of the fuse whose control lies in the highest repository of power in Bangladesh—the 'Ganabhaban'.

That the spectre of fascism is already stalking the simmering backyard of our national politics—the industrial arena—is no surprise. Sanctified by the holy creed of Mujibism, it has chosen to test its potency in the concentrated labour belts in Khulna, Chittagong, Narshingdi, and now, Tongi. The last named locale, being the citadel of intransigence at the very doorsill of power, obviously calls for a mighty thrust from the neo-fascist hordes. 'Operation Tongi' signals the lighting of the fuse whose control lies in the highest repository of power in Bangladesh—the 'Ganabhaban'.

This, however, is not asymptomatic of sanctified violence by organised groups belonging to the ruling party or, for that matter, of official terrorism to stamp out political dissenters in the left camp which has a large following among the industrial workers. This is a methodical campaign of extermination, sufficient forebodings of which had already thickened the air coming as those did from the guardians of freedom and the mini-Fuehrers of Bangladesh. (In my last report an attempt was made to analyse the symptoms as these obtain today in Bangladesh).

In the socio-political matrix of Bangladesh where revolutionary dynamism is spreading like wildfire across the length and the breadth of the country, the strategy, method and the tools of fascism are bound to differ from the specifics of the original doctrine. The class-selfishness of the rapacious expropriators cannot be advanced without some

ideological embellishments—however untenable those may be under theoretical scrutiny. Hence Mujibism. It has been invented to lend the doctrine the necessary metaphysical whiskers to cover the ugly face of evil.

The expropriation of the slogan of scientific socialism, and yet the granting of laissez faire for plunder and loot by an elite which enjoys total political patronage, is the diabolical variation in the method of fascism in Bangladesh. (The bio-data of the administrators in different mills and factories, particularly the big ones, will reveal the exclusivity of the choices involved, and the necessary connections they have with the political hierarchs). The deliberate promotion of this class having a clear license for self-aggrandisement, with the stipulation that they help in the accretion of proportional benefits to their political patrons, is now an open scandal. The anti-capitalist slogan is thus a ruse to consolidate the new acquisitions; the legislation of 'scientific socialism'—with due respect to our indigenous Harvard Group—is the most popular method to bluff one's passage into the abandoned sanctum of economic privileges held till liberation by the big capital of West Pakistan. Nothing could be more diabolical than this novel method of advancing the class-selfishness by a few whose stakes lie in political power.

The social base of this new elite being not too firm in the present state of flux in Bangladesh, they have to precipitate a crisis to entrench themselves more solidly. Since their interest runs counter to revolutionary urge for change in production relations, they, of necessity, design new instruments to subjugate the people. The apparatus of the state, the police and the army, may not be equal to the task as these institutions are nascent; and owing to their participation in the partriotic struggle, they may not lend themselves to repressive task. Before they reorganise the army and the police by weeding out the freedom-fighters, and

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thereby turn them into mercenary institutions to be kept on the leash, they have to have a counterforce to generate terror and to set upon the rest of the population. The Lal Bahini-which has already been shouting blue murder at the left opposition and at the nonagenarian leader Maulana Bhashani, and hurling vile abuses of the most absurd kind to fan the frenzy of its chauvinist killers-is poised for a thrust. They have already started it in Tongi and other industrial areas with the police looking on helplessly.

The other tool is not a new one. It is a near complete control of the government over effective mass communications media such as radio, TV, newspapers, cinema, etc. (By now in Bangladesh, excepting one daily newspaper all the rest are under either the direct control of the government or are the products of different pressure-groups within the Awami League. The major newspapers which have good circulation have been brought under the control of the Ministry of Information. The government has further tightened its grip by turning itself into the biggest single advertiser. The manna of advertisement is earmarked for the favoured few irrespective of their circulation and impact. As a result, newspapers under government control are insipid, puerile and sycophantic; and the rest of the media under the ownership of the nouveau-riche Awami League pressure groups are engaged in spreading falsehoods against their political adversaries).

These are only some tools which our new elite of expropriators are employing to advance their class-selfishness. But the indecent haste of the property grabbers, the loss of credibility of the newspapers and the early exposure of the fascistic face of the Lal Bahini, have exposed our ruling class. The rule of plunder has already given rise to contradictions within its own camp as is evidenced from the disenchantment of the younger group of Awami League boys. The resistance

to this neo-fascism has already started from within the camps of the political following of the ruling party. Thus the condemnation of Mujibism is coming from, amongst others, none else but Rab and Shajahan Siraj, two of the four stalwarts of the Awami League's youth forces.

Fascism may be baring its fangs in Bangladesh. But it is not inevitable. The greatest barrier to fascism is revolution which—acting as an anti-thesis—both sharpens the claws of fascism, on one hand, and limits its spread, on the other. It has to be fought through a rising consciousness and a total commitment to armed struggle.

The stronger the revolutionary armed struggle, the greater the militant bond of the worker-peasant alliance, the sharper the conflicts and vacillations in the ruling classes, the more limited the aura and the power of the fascist rulers. The process goes on until in the end the fascist ruler is encircled in his capital, gnashing his teeth in impotent rage with the flames of revolution tickling his toes.

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Split in Students' League: grave blow to regime

The eventual crack-up in the BCL is no accident of history; nor is it the manifestation of clashes between belligerent interest-groups.

Whatever might be the results of the Dhaka University elections, the split within the monolithic platform of the Bangladesh Chhatra League-with all its ramifications-has now the seal of finality. Resulting as it did from the dialectics of an insurrectionary struggle, the split once again brings into focus the much-debated revolutionary potential of a 'transient class-like group', called the students, in carrying forward a social change. The eventual crack-up in the BCL is no accident of history; nor is it the manifestation of clashes between belligerent interest-groups. It is the dynamic of the new social forces thirsting for radical social change that has led to the split.

The highly amorphous character of the Awami League and its various wings cannot for all time subsume the plurality of forces co-existing within its broad framework. Since the class-base of the party, which of late is talking of class politics, is undefined and often indeterminate, the interaction of the extant forces, and the resultant contradictions within its structural whole, are bound to lead to crises. These crises would necessarily transcend the tenuous group or personality equations as has happened in the case of the BCL, and even defy deeply-ingrained localism in respect of the leadership-cult.

Furthermore, these would lead to crystallisation of classes expressed in at least temporary awareness of class self-identification and increase in militancy along class lines. Once the process has begun, it just cannot be stemmed by sentimental rhetorics of unity and

tradition, or by intervention from the top. Polarisation begins, and reaches a point where one has to affirm a particular position in direct opposition to the other posture. The break-up the BCL which has obviously been precipitated by A.S.M. Abdur Rab and Shajahan Siraj is no superficial or, for that matter, inconsequential phenomenon caused by incompatibility of personality or mere difference over panels in the University elections. It is the result of a political process-the outcome of the crisis within the structural whole of the mass front called the Awami League, and the crystallisation of the new social forces unleashed by the insurrectionary struggle of 1970-71.

The slogans of the Rab-Siraj group clearly point to the extent of radicalisation and social consciousness which has swept the polity in Bangladesh since 1969 onwards. This radicalisation of the polity, to which the students are inextricably bound, has been further intensified by a growing socialist perception.

And socialist perception is no vague vision of equality or mere reformism, but is a definite way of looking at the matrix of society and production relations for the establishment of a classless society. The slogans like 'Marxism Zindabad' and 'Revolution through class struggle' may sound quite out of place coming as they do from the lips of young people who had nothing to do with it the other day. But the slogans have a validity, no matter who raises them, in the absence of a well-knit Marxist-Leninist vanguard party. After all, the tradition of the sub-continental vanguardist party hierarchy and the party-apparat is not a glorious one. Their failure to seize the leadership and thereby establish themselves in the fore of the struggle as the vanguard does not necessarily exclude others from the domain of revolutionary politics.

Here we are faced with the question of which are the agencies of change, and who are really capable

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of becoming the revolutionary elite capable of providing leadership to a revolutionary struggle. Is it the 'hypothetical proletariat', 'the empirical peasantry' or the 'evasive intelligentsia'? And who can really claim to represent them in delivering the goods by successfully launching and completing a national democratic revolution?

Whereas the traditional Marxists, who go by various nomenclatures of vanguardist parties (we have scores of them in Bangladesh) will sneer at this intrusion from unexpected quarters and insist on the monistic model laid down by the Communist Manifesto, newer and newer elements driven by new awareness and social consciousness will continue to swell the ranks of revolutionaries, no matter whatever the platform. This is particularly true of Bangladesh where despite the existence of traditional Marxist parties, clandestine or open, we may witness the flowering of a new revolutionary elite supreme in its cohesion, consciousness and organisation, 'different' and 'apart' from the 'class' or the 'masses' and yet closely related to them.

Going back to the questions posed in the earlier paragraph, no doubt it is the worker-peasant militant alliance which bring about a socialist revolution. But the revolutionary elite may not, of necessity, emerge from the same stratum but may be drawn from the various sub-strata, groups or transient social groups. The students, who belong to the category of a transient class-like-group, have automatically been forming the spearhead in revolutionary struggle in Bangladesh. The basic Marxian yardstick of 'relation to means of production' fails to attribute to them the revolutionary potential required for guiding and completing a revolution. Yet in Bangladesh, as in many other countries, the revolutionary potential lies not with a particular class as such, but in a definable set of

interrelations between classes, temporary sub-groups, power elites and some more general societal conditions. The same reality confers potency on the students, as the harbingers of any revolutionary struggle which we have witnessed over the last 25 years.

Viewed in the light of the above, the sharp swing of a large section of BCL cadres towards extra-parliamentary politics with commitment to social revolution is not to be trifled with. Nor should it be equated with the inner party-struggle within the Awami League. Because by the very nature of their slogans, the BCL cadres under the leadership of Rab and Siraj have moved to the left of whatever left is there in the Awami League or for that matter its allies in the Bangladesh Communist Party or Muzaffar's NAP. That is why the split-whose roots lie in social dynamics-will not find a parallel in a possible rift in the Awami League in times to come. Similarly, their present posture can elicit little sympathy from the parliamentary left of Moni Singh or Professor Muzaffar.

The split in the BCL also sets in motion the historicity of 'revolution within the revolution' to quote that famous title-phrase of Regis Debray's celebrated book. After the senseless fragmentation of the left revolutionary students' organisation, the youth force of Bangladesh, motivated by the urge to change the status quo, converged almost en masse on the platform of the Student's League. The militancy which characterised their participation in the last struggle along with other nationalist, left and democratic forces in the country has suddenly become redundant in the scheme of the party which now rules Bangladesh. The promises for social change also do not ring as true as they did at the time of independence. On the contrary, the youth force finds itself at odds with the new class of expropriators who have overnight turned into a privileged class.

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They have learnt that 'socialism is neither a promise nor a law of nature, but a possibility, an aim to be fought for'.

A clash is therefore inevitable. The legislation of socialism for the sake of plunder and the innovation of a new 'ism' called 'Mujibism' for perpetuating the class interests of the new elite, accompanied by attempts on the part of the dominant class to design its tools of fascism in the shape of Lal Bahini, are good enough reasons for a split of the kind that has taken place. The new rising consciousness against the fallibility of gradualism to end corruption and exploitation have taught them to shout the slogans of class struggle and for changing the status quo by force of arms. After all, they have learnt that 'socialism is neither a promise nor a law of nature, but a possibility, an aim to be fought for'

Pressure mounts on Mujib

When rumours run wild, the rot must be really deep. The current whispers of an imminent state of emergency or similar other antidotes to stem the rot is not an atypical psychosis created by the present syndrome of corruption and jobbery. The existing state of affairs underscores popular intransigence to a ruinous drift, and points to the cabal of conspirators bent upon laying waste this golden land. The state of the nation is in jeopardy. And the people are watching the proceedings with great concern.

Emergency or no emergency, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is faced with an uphill task which calls for a crackdown, and not of sorts only. The situation warrants 'a house-cleaning of his own courtyard'. This is an unpleasant fact, but a fact all the same. The near-organic growth of corruption at all levels has unfortunately been allowed to continue unabated, possibly by default on the part of the Prime Minister, and certainly with the consent of some of the powerful ones around the star-studded court of Ganabhaban. The latest Presidential Order, which talks tough to the hoarders and black-marketeers, has apparently been served to put an end to it.

The problem with our political leadership, ever since independence, has been one of enigmatic response to popular grievances. Its open hostility to political opposition distorts its perspective so much that the obvious always escapes notice. The penchant to label the articulate opposition as the saboteurs of national independence makes them oblivious to the all-pervasive corruption and the conspiracy which has been launched

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The credence to the rumour of some drastic changes in the political and administrative set-up has been strengthened by a three-pronged demand of varying dimensions raised by three different groups aligned with the government.

at the national level and possibly the international level. It is time that the political leadership separates the issues involved, and identifies the ones required for a lasting solution to the most pressing problems, namely, political, bureaucratic and commercial corruption.

The credence to the rumour of some drastic changes in the political and administrative set-up has been strengthened by a three-pronged demand of varying dimensions raised by three different groups aligned with the government. The most forceful demand obviously comes from the young rebels in the Bangladesh Chhatra League under the leadership of Rab and Shahjahan Siraj, who have already won their first round in the university elections against the advocates of Mujibism, and who are very vocal about corruption, malpractices and the 'enemies of social revolution'. They urge the setting up of a Revolutionary Council, disbanding of the cabinet and the Constituent Assembly, promulgation of a state of emergency by the President, and consequent vesting of all powers in the office of the Prime Minister. The objectives of the demands made by the student leaders, on the face of it, are to weed out corruption, profiteers, black-marketeers, dishonest MCAs and the like, on one hand, and the framing of an interim constitution guaranteeing socialism, on the other.

The demand from the second group, that is the Jatiyo Sramik League and the architects of the Lal Bahini, rings similar, but has its usual bias against the left. After their recent abortive thrust on the revolutionary left in the industrial belt, they are once again hoping to obtain the sanction to kill, and to unleash fascism in the country at the behest of their mentors the new class of expropriators who have overnight become the captains of a large number of industries, factories, business establishments and abandoned properties in the wake of independence.

The third demand, however, is of a different nature and originates from a different quarter. The

schemers in this respect are our 'socialist operators' belonging to NAP (Muzaffar) and the Bangladesh Communist Party. They are skillfully pressurizing the Prime Minister to opt for a 'National government' comprising the three-and the only three-'patriotic' parties, namely, the Awami League, NAP (Muzaffar) and the CPB. They are slaving to use the crackdown, if there be any, against their political adversaries in one single sweep. And in this they have the green signal from the Indo-Soviet axis which is demanding a very high price for the help they had rendered in the liberation struggle. The price being a base in Chittagong for the Russians and a hinterland economy in Bangladesh for the Indians.

Such being the differing motivation in each case, what is the Sheikh likely to do under the circumstances? One thing is certain: such a crackdown would not target corruption and expropriation. It would be used to bludgeon the dissenters.

Talking of a political crackdown, it does not seem very likely at the moment. The demand for elimination of the democratic and left opposition is being consistently voiced by the fascist elements in the ruling party and the Soviet-financed socialists of the NAP (Muzaffar) and the CPB. The targets who are being called all kinds of names, ranging from a Razakar to a Chinese or CIA agent, are being consistently maligned by the revisionist press and their cohorts in the nationalised newspapers.

The malignancy of these propagandists is also borne out by the fact that some of them even discovered the spook of Maoist agents among the rebellious Rab-Siraj group. But why should the Sheikh acquiesce in such a scheme of political crackdown when someone else wants to train his guns using his shoulder? And what machinery would be used for the calculated political repression of the kind mentioned above?

Certainly it cannot be the Bangladesh Army, which still retains the patriotic zeal of the recent struggle, and hence may not turn against its own people at the

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bidding of one party or the other. The only other machinery available for such a crackdown would be the Indians whose help may be involved under the 'Friendship Treaty'. That also sounds a little far-fetched. Because unlike the Soviet-financed socialists, the Sheikh may not like to create such a bad precedent. Nor would the Indians, even if only to keep up appearances of non-intervention.

Despite these deterrents, if the hands of the Prime Minister are forced, and the crackdown is precipitated, we may witness the worst civil strife in the history of this country. Calculated repression has never paid off in the past. It will now harden the determination of the people to fight against falsehood, conspiracy and alien interests.

So far as the Prime Minister is concerned, the need of the hour is his ruthless and determined bid to root out corruption. Corruption is not immanent; it is merely contingent, and this contingency can be tackled only by a thorough clean-up of the Awami League, the administration, the nationalised industries, banks and other financial institutions and their collaborators in trade and commerce. Hoarding and black-marketing cannot be exclusively engineered by some unscrupulous profiteers unless they are fully backed by powerful people in the administration, the cabinet and the ruling party. If there is any corrosion in the Sheikh's image today, it is because of corruption. No amount of vitriolic against the political opposition, and of name-calling, is going to restore that.

By all accounts, the Prime Minister is more likely to launch a major operation against corrupt people and practices. According to reports, the architects of corruption are already passing uneasy moments. If he succeeds in this task, in which the entire nation is with him, life may again become worth living in this ravaged soil. But can he afford to? (He cannot?)

Freedom or death

Exactly five years ago, in the year of 1967 and the month of August, Fakir Abdul Mannan, Secretary of the then East Pakistan Muslim League, had suddenly lashed out against Holiday. In a statement displayed prominently in the Trust papers, he had let loose a fusillade of charges, accusing the paper of everything ranging from disrespect to Mr. Jinnah and the ideology of Pakistan, on one hand, to owing allegiance elsewhere, on the other. In the intervening period of 1967, Holiday had to survive many more ordeals, planned by professional arm-twisters in the Information Department of Ayub and Monem, and threats of annihilation by the right-wing press and politicians, particularly those belonging to the Muslim League, the Jamaat-e-Islami and the PDP. Altaf Hussain Qureshi's 'Urdu Digest' and 'Asia', Aziz Ahmed Bilyaminee's 'Young Pakistan' and Majid Nizami's 'Nawa-i-Waqt', among others, are replete with vicious articles demanding drastic action against Holiday.

Thanks to the contradictions in the tottering state-machines of the military dictator and the intensity of popular movement raging throughout the former Pakistan, more particularly the former East Bengal, the ruling coterie had to be content with such backstage manoeuvres, as blacklisting, and other intimidatory tactics perfected by the Pakistani breed of Goebbles over a decade.

Then came a brief spell of relaxation following the abdication of Ayub, a year of hope and expectations that alternated between one crisis and another. The unrelenting crusade of Holiday continued as before despite the admonition that discretion is the better part of valour. It reflected the stream of consciousness which graduated from the relativity of substantive autonomy

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Holiday
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before
despite the
admonition
that
discretion is
the better
part of valour.

It is an assertion of Holiday's faith in absolute independence and its commitment to the struggle against national repression through kindling the fire of insurrection.

to the absolutism of national independence through armed struggle. And that consciousness was borne out by the headlines in the Holiday such as 'We Can Bear It No More' (November 22, 1970), 'History Beckons Sheikh Mujib' (January 3, 1971), 'Bengal Dishonoured Again' (March 7, 1971), 'They are Not finished With You Yet, Bengal' (March 14, 1971), 'All or Nothing' (Editorial, March 14, 1971), 'History Still has a niche For the Sheikh' (March 22, 1971), 'Joi Sheikh' (Editorial, March 22, 1971).

The recounting of the above is no apologia nor, for that matter, a clarification of Holiday's stand. It is an assertion of Holiday's faith in absolute independence and its commitment to the struggle against national repression through kindling the fire of insurrection. And it was articulated in symphony with the undaunted people of Bangladesh at a time when the pipe-dream of independence through negotiations was an obsession with a section of our hesitant leadership.

The crackdown of Yahya came, as predicted by Holiday. The paper's open rebellion against the military machine was retaliated with vengeance by the occupation regime by banning the publication along with two other papers, namely, the People and the Forum, and freezing of bank accounts by a Martial Law order.

Today, once again Holiday is the target; and the people demanding its banning along with three other weeklies are, ironically, using the same terms as was uttered by Fakir Mannan, the obscurantist elements and the occupation regime. The trepidation of the nationalised newspapers, the total silence of the Journalist Union on the issue and the obvious glee in certain quarters are symptomatic of the erosion which is eating into the vitals of this nation. It was, however, only expected of a press which has been caged too long by the Pakistani rulers to learn to fly. With its wings still clipped, the press in Bangladesh is destined to play the tune with all the servility it has acquired over the years.

The demand made by the organising secretary of the Awami League and the tenor of his threat surpasses any other precedent. The dire warning that 'if the government fails to take action against the four papers (mentioned by the organising secretary), the people will take action against them' exposes the face of fascism in the ruling party. It also reveals the weakness of the regime and its vulnerability to valid criticism, either in speech or print.

States, such as Nazi Germany, used smear campaigns very effectively; the language of weapons to shut up the intransigent was no less effective. Hitler told his followers to 'answer everything'. The answers need not be correct; in fact those mainly consisted of blaming someone else—the Jews, the communists or the unsympathetic neighbour. In our case too, the modern-day vigilantes in the person of the organising secretary of the Awami League is following the Hitlerite dictum. It is based upon the diabolical logic that since someone or some institution is beyond criticism, any criticism is an act of treachery.

But will this really work? The threat of annihilation by setting the 'people' against the 'unpatriotic' newspapers and critics may be real. But the reality of death is too quotidian in Bangladesh to be fearsome anymore.

Holiday prefers death to servility, and above all else, it values freedom. The return of the Pakistani vocabulary in our politics, and the application of the same technique in terrorising the people will be resisted by us and the people of Bangladesh. Let the enemies of freedom remember, a person is not necessarily unpatriotic because he does not express himself in the same shopworn phrases of lesser politicians. Holiday will continue to serve the people as it did in the past despite threats and intimidation, death and misery; and it will resist the conspiracy to sell out this country to any power-big or small, imperialist, social imperialist or sub-imperialist.

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John the merchant

The British mercantile capital and its subcontinental collaborationists never had it so good since the winding up of the East India Company.

When the Rt. Hon'ble John Stonehouse told a reception in Dhaka last week that press freedom was being abused here, he was obviously talking preemptively lest the 'abuse' of the printed word spoil the broth of an excellent business proposition called Bangladesh. Already the knowledgeable skeptics in the country are looking askance at his frequent ceremonious visits to this virgin land, and getting wary of his patronising shop-talk that ranges from precious advice to the inept administrators of an infant nation to a generous dosage of moral-boosters in political, quasi-political and social receptions. Thanks to his genius for friendly persuasion and his extraordinary politico-business acumen, the British mercantile capital and its subcontinental collaborationists never had it so good since the winding up of the East India Company. And in this fantastically suave operation of a vast magnitude, the erstwhile crusader for the cause of Bangladesh has drawn a sprinkling of talents from all walks of life—politics, business and bureaucracy—who seem to matter in this open country teeming with fresh exploits.

The purview of the operation of the Rt. Hon'ble and his compatriots in Bangladesh, India and the United Kingdom transcends the historic committee that had been set up in England with the Rt. Hon'ble as its guiding light to support and augment the Bangladesh cause prior to liberation. It now extends to such mundane spheres as shipping, chartering of ships and aircraft, currency remittance and trade on a tripolar axis, printing of currency notes, commodity trade at a high premium in lieu of the pound-sterling obtained from the expatriate Bengalees in England and a variety of other business

arenas covering imports and exports. In every deal that matters and which has got to be cleared at a very high level, that is, planning, finance, industry and commerce, the Rt. Hon'ble or one of the ornate offices of his affiliates in Dhaka turn out to be the beneficiary. And hardly anyone is able to keep track of these strange goings-on.

In all these deals, except the ones which are clean (some deals have got to be clean for the purpose of keeping a front), the country and the government are the losers.

These are but hints of what is happening in Bangladesh through the machinations of a well-knit, intelligent and suave clan of financial operators to whom politics is an investment for profits; and the profits, by God, are plenty. Whether this kind of politico-business racket has any link with the invisible purse-strings of some powers, no one knows. But one thing is certain, so far this is a mightily successful operation by the British mercantile interest and their subcontinental collaborationists and of course the 'patriotic' political stringers of some of the political parties.

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Sheikh Mujib and the press: Only Total Obedience

The journalists in those days had stood up against such atrocious regimentation, and they were joined by a reassuring and powerful voice from the political plane which had emboldened the press to carry on their struggle.

The concept of a free press advanced so splendidly following the birth of a new nation was buried for good last Sunday under the worthy green sod of the Dhaka Press Club, the venue which is resplendent with the 25-year old history of the Fourth Estate's struggle for liberty. The pressmen did have tears, but lacked courage to shed them. What a contrast, considering that its precinct was not allowed to be desecrated by Monem Khan or his mentor for the reason that they had nurtured no respect for the Press and had employed all their powers to curb its independence:

As the journalists in those days had stood up against such atrocious regimentation, they were joined by a reassuring and powerful voice from the political plane which had emboldened the press to carry on their struggle. It was the voice of Sheikh Mujib. He had truly endeared himself to the Press by taking up their cause; as a gesture of reciprocity, he got unstinted support from this community which, he should honestly concede, subsequently helped him to rise to the dazzling height of popularity.

Somehow, the crude attempt to forget the past does not escape one's notice. With the absolute power of the nation in his hand, his attitude has shockingly undergone a change. The necessity of ingratiating himself with the Press, whose cause he had always upheld, has now entirely disappeared. Those who had witnessed him at his semantic worst in the annual conference of the Dhaka Union of Journalists must invariably have been left with the sad impression that when it comes to playing power politics, the language

becomes one and the same; what really differs is the man. Formerly, it was Ayub Khan and his vassal Monem Khan. Currently, it is the Sheikh. One can understand his abhorrence for being equated in any manner with the former rulers of Pakistan. But, can it, in the present context, really be helped?

As was almost natural, many vital points were raised in the speech by the outgoing President of the Union. Those concerned the problems with which the community of newsmen is plagued, essentially because of the 25 years of dictatorial misrule. Emerging from the web of controlled Press together with all its concomitant afflictions, the Press in Bangladesh had really wanted to breathe fresh air unpolluted by personal bickerings, vendetta and an attempt to convert it into a part of the government gazette. They wanted to address themselves to their ennobling mission motivated by a supreme desire to make the Fourth Estate a noble society. There were also issues which required to be streamlined in the light of past experience. The need for setting up a Press Council where both the representatives of the government and the Press would sit across a table to explore the fundamentals of government-press relationship was emphasised by the President. To be frank, such an arrangement is anathema to a truly democratic dispensation, but the pressmen had proposed to work it out in view of the peculiar post-liberation phenomenon through which we are passing. The necessity for the diversification of assets of the big newspapers which the government have inherited by chance as the upshot of liberation, and the formation of Management Boards to bring them in line with the pronounced government policy of socialism was also sufficiently stressed. The DUJ President had made it clear that it was against the very ideology of the present government to keep these newspapers under the thumb of the Information Department spearheaded by a set of people whose accomplishments, both academic and

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intellectual, are open to challenge. Above everything else, this tears asunder the spirit of a free press and doesn't look so much different from the National Press Trust of the olden days.

The PM's 40 minute discourse practically went abegging in that he did not touch any of these problems even with a pair of tongs. Reverting immediately to the pomposity so common in public meetings, he preferred to upbraid the Press for being unethical and unpatriotic. He even arraigned them for having developed a propensity to blackmail and remarked that there should be honest and patriotic journalism in the country. If anything, this betrays no sympathy or respect on the part of the PM for the Press as such.

He became a bit of a theoretician too in the course of his 'advice' to the journalists. He dilated on the virtues of allowing the dust of liberation to settle down and in the process spoke of the 'responsibility of the press to channelise public emotion through constructive thinking as embodied in the four principles of state policy' that he had set before the nation. Here lie the roots of the regime's 'control' philosophy. To them press is not a free institution aspiring to serve the public good according to its own values. It is rather an instrument which must 'channelise public emotion' in support of values and objectives held dear by the regime in power. This is held to be vital in the interest of post-revolution stability which is another name for keeping the Press under an indefinite period of regimentation.

The point arises that not many in this country will agree with the PM's philosophical sermons. At least, the voice which is being heard these days in the country against the so-called 'Mujibbad', in which crucible all the state policies are being placed should be a pointer. Why should the Press as a whole channelise support for ideas and values to which it may not subscribe? Why should the interests of the State be always identified with the interests of a regime? Who defines what is honest and

constructive criticism? And why should the Press be forced to adopt a code of ethics *a la Awami League*?

It has now been fairly clear as to what the regime considers as constructive criticism. The flood of congratulatory public comment is a familiar feature now, similar to what used to obtain during the so-called 'Decade of Reforms'. The "hailers" sprout like poisonous mushrooms in a neglected land. It looks like a staged performance in a hall studded with distorted mirrors. On Sunday last, the pressmen were virtually ensnared in such a situation. They were themselves made to dig a grave for whatever little freedom they are enjoying today even though by courtesy. The irony of the fate is that the man who had promised to lead them to the golden land has now unpropitiously gone back on his words and has instead showed up with a pack of uncharitable remarks.

Little did the PM realise that whatever he had said while railing against the Press, the charges of blackmail sounded like an attempt to blackmail the Press itself. He wanted them, in the name of post liberation stability and solidarity, not to project things which might add to the discomfiture of his government and his colleagues. What he has asked the Press to do, in plain terms, was to become a legion of eulogy singers. Any faltering from this prescribed path of freedom might land them in trouble. Should one be wrong to say that it all amounts to blackmailing? It also suggests a proclivity of monolithic mentality, despite whatever empty sounds the regime may make for unfettered democracy.

There is really no harm in acknowledging it if we are moving towards a one-party, one-leader and one philosophy state. At least there will then be some consistency in precept and practice. The blessings may be held to be doubtful but the regime and the state (blending into one in such a set-up) will probably have a sense of direction, if not always a sense of achievement. What we are facing in Bangladesh today is an abundance

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of hypocrisy and a paucity of conviction; In the welter of confusion and expediency, both the government and the people seem to be drifting away from each other.

Let us examine some of the Prime Minister's observations in the given perspective. He read out a number of headlines that had appeared in the Press from time to time since independence. There were one or two among them, let it be conceded, which had the elements of sensationalism and hyperbole. It was doubtless a gross mathematical miscalculation to suggest that 50 lakh tonnes of foodgrain were being smuggled out to India. So also the reports of a genocide, instead of calling it large-scale murders. There is no denying the fact that this section of the Press needs to act in a more responsible manner in future. But one could have been surely convinced of Sheikh Mujib's sincerity had he chided, in the same breath, another section which was indulging in a similar kind of distortion and misreporting but is still thriving proudly because it has lent complete support to the present regime.

The charges often levelled by the pro-regime papers against the opposition leaders that they were being financed from outside, they had some collaboration with Pakistan and that they were the agents of imperialists or the Maoists were most of the time found to be fictitious. But the PM is silent on this count.

There were also a few other headlines which the PM read out which were difficult to understand as to how they could be incriminating. If a question is raised in the columns of the press whether the country is sovereign or not, does it amount to subversion? Such a question can only be raised by patriots who want to safeguard the sovereignty of the country. What was then the PM's objection for? The newspaper is basically the forum for Great Debates, a fact which is universally recognised. The issues involved are examined, scrutinised, tossed back and forth before they are examined again or rejected. And the government which

tries to block people from such debates can be anything but a democratic government.

It has also been claimed by the PM that the Press in Bangladesh was free, or else the criticism against his government in many newspapers wouldn't have appeared. If one may remember, it was Monem Khan's patent argument. He even used to go a step further with the plea that the number of public meetings addressed by Sheikh Mujib, the Awami League and other opposition parties which criticised the government testified to the fact that human liberty in all its forms and manifestations did really exist. But did it really exist?

None disputes the fact that Sheikh Mujib is the product of a struggle. But this does not give any guarantee that liberty could not be jeopardised in his hands. There are instances in the world of Dr. Nkrumah and Ahmed Ben Bella who too were the products of struggle in their own way. But what happened thereafter? Nothing should therefore be taken for granted in so far as the human character is concerned. A popular political leader is always in the dock and he must acquit himself by his sheer performance.

As Madam Ronald said: 'O, democracy, what crimes are committed in thy name.' She was guillotined, a fate now shared by the press in Bangladesh.

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The hungry are marching

History beckons Bhashani again

The average peasant in Bangladesh has never earned more than a hundred taka a month, and independence did not augment this earning.

The ill-starred Bengali nation is once again in the grip of a crisis, one whose magnitude and dimension surpass anything of this nature in the history of this land. In plain words, there is not enough food for this nation of 75 million. No matter from which angle the situation is considered, the economics do not work out. So many mouths to feed and so much of food available—committed and in the pipeline—the lopsided answer is inescapable famine.

The present crisis hasn't come upon Bangladesh suddenly like the cyclone of November 1970. The situation has been worsening for the past five months at least. The sharp vertical climb of the price chart spelled out the danger in unmistakable terms. And the moment the price of rice crossed the 60 taka line, that danger had arrived. In the weeks that followed, the spiral continued; and the price of rice, the base indicator, went beyond 100 taka per maund and has stayed there.

The average peasant in Bangladesh has never earned more than a hundred taka a month, and independence did not augment this earning. With the rocketing price index, it was beyond his means to feed his family and himself. And when everything that either constituted a source of income for him, or helped make existence possible, gradually disappeared, he had nowhere to go. Over 40% of the peasantry is without any employment or any subsidy from the government—or the promise of one. But the dividing line between the

employed and unemployed has grown thinner, purely in terms of survival. Cliche-ridden speeches by government functionaries are becoming more and more strident; but they do not make up for food. The peasant population in Bangladesh today is in no mood to hear the old platitudes any more.

Ravaged as it was by the Pakistan army, the little that was left in the country has also vanished. Organised bands of smugglers found the time and the opportunity ripe to plunder the land as long as it had something of value, something that could be quickly turned into cash.

Unbridled corruption has seeped down to the lowest levels of the government machinery, rendering it nearly helpless to face even day to day problems.

Textiles, for instance, have become a luxury, despite imports from Japan and other countries. For a people who could make do with the barest minimum, even a yard of cloth is something of a dream.

The stunning price hike going upwards relentlessly, has made serious dents in the economy, setting in its wake a vicious inflationary trend and the consequent shrinking of purchasing power.

More importantly, the forces unleashed by the independence movement were too massive to be contained by the government. The explosive energies are seeking a channel and it cannot be long denied them.

Despite his vacillations, his denunciations that were often strange, Maulana Bhashani was the very first leader in Bangladesh who smelled the wind and forewarned the government and the people of the crisis that was coming; the crisis that is upon us today. An old man nearing ninety, virtually all his political life behind him, was just not able to shut his eyes to the misery and helplessness of the people.

His basic stand has remained unaltered for the betterment of the peasants' and workers' lot. Dubbed

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by many as a Chinese agent, a 'threat to the peace of Bangladesh', Maulana Bhashani has remained the ultimate voice of the repressed masses.

His demand for the formation of an all party government in place of the present monolithic structure is equally justifiable on the ground that reforms within the administration would eventually radiate out to the masses. If nothing else, corruption, nepotism and secret deals would be eradicated. Links could again be forged between the people and the government—links that are basic to statecraft, no matter what form it takes. The present government's rapport with the masses has virtually vanished (with the sole exception of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's personal charisma); and it stands isolated.

To see a threat to Awami League in Maulana Bhashani's proposal for a national government is to take a foreshortened view of the situation. A party, that came to power with the will of the people behind it, must be seriously lacking in confidence to get jittery at this proposal.

The hunger march organised by the Maulana and Krishak Samity is not meant to create chaos.

It has a defined and specific purpose to shake down the power elite from their eyries and force them to come to terms with reality. Hunger marches by themselves cannot fill empty stomachs; they can, however, initiate a process that would guarantee no more empty stomachs.

Bangladesh is imperilled today and would have slid towards more, and perhaps unknown, dangers. Before the wounds of the liberation struggle could begin to heal, the nation was face to face with disaster again. And Maulana Bhashani had to take a stand—a resolute and uncompromising stand, to defend the rights of the people and to demand succour for the suffering millions.

Today's hunger march is meant to do just that. It is anybody's guess how the government will react. To remain silent or try and smash the movement are the only options the administration has. If it plumps for the second, a whole series of chain reactions can conceivably plunge the country into utter anarchy.

The call for the hunger march has been received with unprecedented enthusiasm all over Bangladesh. Very little was required to be done in respect of organising hunger marches. The half-starved masses, on the verge of total famine, welcomed this opportunity to illustrate their grievances in positive terms.

The Prime Minister's absence from the country seems to have aggravated the crisis. Nothing is functioning properly and the accretion of serious and urgent problems is incredible.

Maulana Bhashani will be addressing a public meeting at the Paltan in the afternoon and will personally lead the hunger march which is scheduled to terminate at Gonobhavan.

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Not by charisma alone

Mujibbad, slanderous statements against Maulana Bhashani or phillipics against China cannot substitute for food and clothing.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's return to his native land, albeit delayed and perhaps unnecessarily so, is nevertheless a sentimental occasion. A leader who symbolised the very spirit of Bangladesh even in captivity last year must certainly have a certain something—clear-headed political thinking, love for the Bengali people or even that rather shop-worn term called personal charisma.

A country, however, cannot live on the qualities of a leader alone. The harsh facts of life are an altogether different proposition. Mujibbad, slanderous statements against Maulana Bhashani or phillipics against China cannot substitute for food and clothing. Scores of protest days cannot make up for the dire miseries of the people, now doubly frustrated after the independence of Bangladesh.

The masses of Bangladesh voted for the six point formula of the Awami League—and they voted for Mujib. The verdict was clear, unambiguous. On the people's level, there was no equivocation. Mujib's hand had to be strengthened. The cry in those days was: Let Mujib have the mandate, let him work out the new arrangements. So great was the trust in December 1970.

Islamabad however, was thinking in quite different terms without quite understanding Mujib's politics and the fact that Bengalis would, for the first time, be in the ascendancy was too bitter a pill for them to swallow. Apart from a reduction in their traditional *Burra Sahib* way of life, the Pakistan army officers could not quite reconcile themselves to the idea that their stature as a martial race would soon be in jeopardy. And this inevitably followed, even though Mujib had done no more than organise the people here in a non-

cooperation movement devoid of any overtones of violence.

The present agony began six months ago. Not the agony of bullets or bayonets, the constant fear of being a Bengali or worse still, an educated Bengali, but an unexpectedly queer mixture of frustration, disenchantment and the tough fight to stay alive.

It would be less than just to blame the Prime Minister for having failed. Equally, the administrative set-up and even the Awami League has a minority—a very small minority, no doubt—of people to whom money and the good life are secondary.

Collectively, they are no more than a voice in the wilderness; but their very presence makes the scene less bleak.

Obviously, it is Prime Minister Mujib who has to carry out a cleansing programme in the cabinet, in the administration and in the Awami League. People still trust him. More than that, they like him. It would take a Simon Agonistes, after his eyes had been gouged out, to remain oblivious to this fact.

The question, of course, is whether he can run these reforms through, whether he can risk a possible splintering of his party.

A great deal hinges on this question, possibly the fate of Bangladesh.

The stakes have gone up. This is the kind of game where countless human beings can either triumph—or fall by the wayside.

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How effective will be the wind of change?

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Although belated, the self purification campaign launched by the ruling Awami League to restore its fast-dwindling popular image is a welcome departure from the nine-month long self-defeating rule of conceit and bludgeon. It took them creditably at least some degree of hindsight to acknowledge the obvious and to de-escalate its frenzied charade against the left-democratic forces in the country. This does not in itself indicate the much needed change of heart on the part of the government excepting possibly tactical adjustment in the face of mounting crises.

This scepticism notwithstanding, one can easily discern a qualitative change in the attitude, bearing and demeanour of our political government. It is all the more discernible because the present pragmatic approach to economic and political realities stands in sharp contrast to the kind of political witchcraft that was being practised by the ruling party in the name of four fundamentals and that precious bogey of sovereignty at stake. The turning point in the method of governance coincides with the return of the Prime Minister from abroad where he was in the sick-bed. Removed from his own people in the restful retreat of Geneva during convalescence, he must have felt far more drawn to the wretched people of Bangladesh and their woes and agonies, and he could possibly steal those solitary moments for introspection. At least that was the impression I got when I called on him at Geneva late last month.

The effort of the government, however piecemeal and inconsequential, to grapple with the basic realities of running the state for the common good has injected a kind of cautious optimism in the minds of the people. No one expects the problems to be solved overnight or the prices to fall with the touch of a magic wand. But everyone expects the government to act beneficially to stem the rot—and the rot is very much there.

The hypersensitivity of the government, before this present phase had begun, to any criticism has seemingly disappeared. The official newspapers are no longer loaded with admonitory statements, intimidatory rhetorics and narcissistic self-adulation. This is no credit for the protected press of the Ministry of Information but a reflection of a mood of relative sanity on the part of our political leadership. It looks and sounds more business-like, and to that effect is being watched by the people with expectancy.

To me the change in the tenor of the government's refrain is more important than the projected actions; because the poor legacy of nine months of administrative, economic and political misadventure will always impede the government's graduation to sanity. It is more likely that most of the present plans of action to weed out corruption, bring down the prices, check smuggling and purge the ruling party of corrupt and dishonest elements will continue to remain a half-measure. Thus the expulsion of 19 MCAs and the serving of show cause notice on a number of others may even be a mere sop to mollify public opinion. And it may so happen, and it is possibly so, that the hierarchy in the ruling party remaining as it is, victimisation on political ground cannot be ruled out. At least there are two MCAs known to have aligned themselves with the Rab group of dissidents who have been conveniently lumped with the rest of the 19 getting the sack.

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The change initiated by the Prime Minister in the strategy of governance cannot perhaps percolate down to the others in the party, or in the hierarchy with immediate effect. After all, any change in the orientation will have to be followed up by a radical disorientation of those involved in governance, and in positions of power both in the party and in government. The house-cleaning will be a mere eyewash unless drastic changes are made around the seat of power. The proverbial big fish who eats up the small ones will otherwise continue to strut in the political stage and raise its head whenever the pressure will ease.

Time running out for opposition

It could have been Maulana Bhashani's uncertain stance and flighty politics; or, alternately, it could be attributed to the dissident Chhatra League leader Rab's fierce and exclusive political ambition. But chances of a united left-democratic front as an alternative to Awami League are fading fast. To begin with, the National Awami Party led by Maulana Bhashani has still to have a definite identity of its own in the post-liberation period. It has largely been a one-man show, despite the inculcation of Young Turks—Kazi Zafar and Rashed Khan Menon.

More importantly, Maulana Bhashani's abrupt swings from one stance to another, the marked inconsistencies in his public pronouncements, and the largely negative approach to the political imperatives, have greatly eroded whatever ideological base the party has.

Nevertheless, despite such enormous handicaps, the grand old man of Bangladesh politics is far from being a spent force. His almost telepathic understanding of the country's problems coupled with a strange, psychic rapport with the masses have never waned; and those still endow him with a special magic—the ability to communicate with and arouse the people, to make them aware of the processes, the moves, the intrigues that might ultimately harm their interest.

It has been reported that one of the most widely known figures of the liberation struggle, Major Jalil, has joined the Maulana's party. He is known, by name at least, throughout Bangladesh, which fact alone ought to give NAP added lustre and greater depth of appeal to the masses. Major Jalil is also reputed to be a relentless, driven person, and his experience as an army officer is bound

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to contribute a great deal towards firming up the organisational aspect of the NAP.

Yet all these developments, welcome as they are, still don't bring the opposition forces any closer to each other. The canker that had eaten into the vitals of the United NAP and finally split it into two factions—Maulana Bhashani's and Muzaffar's—was creeping into the bloodstream of the opposition corpus—that very canker which was eventually responsible for Mohammed Toaha's group shearing off from the National Awami Party and opting for politics of action, or more action, in supercession to peasant rallies, trade union conferences and such other forms of political agitations, which have, so far lamentably failed to activate the people.

A.S.M. Abdur Rab, whose dramatic break with the Establishment, and the Establishment's constellation of cohorts, launched him directly into mass politics. Yet, he still remains a Mr. X, an unknown political factor whose final swing is yet to come—that providing a refreshing contrast to the lackeys of the establishment mandarins. Still, the Rab-Siraj group has gone from strength to strength. If Bangladesh had some sort of a Gallup Poll, his popularity would show a steadily rising curve. Yet Rab has chosen to go it alone in the parliamentary arena impelled by the lionising he has received, and continues to receive from the masses, an adulation based more on his apparently tough insistence on an order based on scientific socialism—a catch-all term yet to be defined and anchored in the political philosophy and ideological aspirations of the people. Yet, notwithstanding the rather enigmatic approach to the political, economic and social conditions in the Bangladesh of today, Rab remains a potent force, a muffled but growing challenge to Awami League's brazen expropriation of the revolutionary left's role since it came to power in Bangladesh.

Recent reports of the possibility of Dr. Alim al Razee heading Rab's new party promise a more coherent line of action for the party Rab proposes to launch. It

would be foolish to consider Dr. Razee's formal association with the dissident group as another political spectacular. Dr. Razee's long and vast experience in politics ought at least to add a little more flesh to Rab's projected party, as and when it does come about. Admittedly, Dr. Razee has never been a stumper and is known largely by those who have followed the course of parliamentary politics in this country. But his incisive brilliance on the floors of the assembly will be a definite asset to the Rab-Siraj group.

Promising as these signs might be, the crucial dilemma still remains. A splintering of opposition forces whether for tactical, ideological or personal reasons, is a depressing commentary on their political understanding, as reflected in their inability to forge a united front even on a minimal programme. Must we then reconcile ourselves to another period of autocratic rule by a monolithic organisation, a hegemony with all its attendant ills, a carte blanche that would be euphemistically cloaked as a referendum on the constitution?

Not a merger, not a 'grand alliance,' not even a united front, but at least an electoral alliance, is the least the people expect. Irrespective of bona fides, antecedents and competence of the existing groups as fronts and irrespective of the way the wind of change would eventually blow, the need of the hour is the coming together of viable, responsible and functionally committed forces, taking up the challenge without quibbling over their individual popularities or their respective organisational strengths.

Much is expected from them, as well as from individuals like Oli Ahad, Abul Bashir and their parties and others. Can they now overcome their personal ambitions and their idiosyncracies and their often confused approaches to national problems?

The alternative, as they must be aware themselves, would be a long leap towards fascism, whose ghost has already begun to cast long shadows over this blood-soaked land.

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A party is born

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The curious circumstances under which opposition politics in Bangladesh are beginning to surface were thrown into sharp focus by the postulates on which Abdur Rab's much-awaited party was launched last week. Equally curious was Major Jalil's unexpected association with the National Socialist Party (Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal) when he had consistently given the impression that Maulana Bhashani's NAP, despite its obvious failings, was the only party which offered a ray of hope and the only one that could accommodate zealous, patriotic and revolutionary figures like him. In all likelihood, the schism in the Bhashani NAP is of such an acute nature that it discourages the dedicated from plumping for it. The Maulana's mercurial temperament and gyrating stand might well result in further damaging his own party.

The Rab-Jalil party is as yet only a promise, but a promise of the kind that has every chance of being fulfilled. A.S.M. Abdur Rab has fired the imagination of the people—sick, tired, despairing. The future, despite all the gleaming phrases the written constitution contains, remains bleak, with the hint of even bleaker things to come.

In such an unrelieved atmosphere of gloom, the coming together of Major Jalil and Abdur Rab is something in the nature of a beacon. A distant one undoubtedly, but a beacon nevertheless. Rab's rocketing popularity and Major Jalil's great prestige among the masses ought to, by all accounts, provide a solid case for the National Socialist Party. Rab and his team have already shown their courage and their capability to face great challenges. And Major Jalil's

total dedication to the people's cause as well as his willingness to undertake demanding tasks need hardly be stressed. The two can complement each other in an extraordinarily impressive venture in politics.

The JSD, as the new party is popularly known, aims at bringing about radical changes in the political and social structure of Bangladesh, according to its declared programme. The term 'scientific socialism', vague and nebulous as it is to the masses, remains the source from which all other ideological commitments flow.

The new party intends to smash all class barriers. According to the JSD programme, the eighty per cent of the 'haves' must be made to share their affluence with the ninety-two per cent of the 'have nots', thereby setting into motion the process of creating a classless society.

The party's initial declaration makes it firmly committed to establishing a worker-peasant alliance which would eventually hold state power.

The modus operandi, as envisaged in JSD's programme, is a revolutionary struggle directed at overthrowing the bourgeoisie and the compradors who wield power in Bangladesh today.

One of the more important targets for the JSD is to bring into the mainstream of struggle all forces irrespective of vocational, communal and ethnic differences. In other words, Hindus and Muslims, peasants and workers, freedom fighters and students alike.

The party believes in socialism first and democracy later. It is strongly opposed to having any links with imperialism, in whatever shape or form. It has, in fact, committed itself to an unceasing struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and all forms of capitalistic exploitation. JSD believes that a revolutionary movement in Bangladesh would

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The dark patches in Rab and Siraj's past will have to be explained and accounted for.

greatly strengthen other peoples in other countries fighting for national liberation.

National Socialist Party's objectives appear to be clear enough but the success of such a revolutionary programme would depend greatly on the party leadership's ability to close the credibility gap between the party and the people. While there may be no mystery about Major Jalil, Rab still remains something of an enigma. His undeniable appeal to the masses is sometimes overshadowed by memories of his association with the ruling party.

To what extent he and Shahjahan Siraj have been able to cut the knots that had bound them to Awami League's student wing is yet to be known. Before JSD can hope to gain a sizeable following and establish its credentials among the masses, the dark patches in Rab and Siraj's past will have to be explained and accounted for.

Should doubts continue to nag, total acceptability would also continue to remain a distant goal, despite the fire and thunder the leaders of JSD are capable of producing.

Debacle at UNO

The United Nations lobby looked a trifle unkindly, if not inhospitable to the Bangladesh team of observers, when the benedictions of the General Assembly failed to lift our soul. Neither acrimony nor pyrotechnic nor a showing of hands could have undone what has already been swept under the carpet. The burial of the question of our admission, at least for another year, seems to be the best of the bargain we could bid for after the predicable stared at our face.

Not that the element of consolation was altogether missing. We could at least draw some muffled satisfaction from the handing out of poetic justice by a not-too-ungenerous General Assembly when it adopted the Yugoslav resolution without any amendments. But the passage of the Argentinian resolution reflecting Pakistan's point of view rendered the unanimity a divided wish. The final denouement to our quasi-independent foreign policy, however, came from the President's pulpit. His near-vaedictory statement decreeing the two resolutions to be interdependent sent the Observer's team reeling back to square one. And the issue of our admission has now become intricately woven with what the Chinese representative in the Security Council called the non-implementation of the UN resolutions under Article 307.

Notwithstanding the justiciability and moral force of the question of admission of Bangladesh into the UN, the outcome of our adventure in the milieu of international politics is sadly commensurate to our lack of comprehension of the nuances of bilateral and multilateral relationship between countries, and of the international scenario. Resultantly, Bangladesh has become an embarrassment even to her staunch allies,

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particularly India. The goings-on in the lobby of the United Nations prior to the anti-climactic finale and the natural trepidation of the sponsors of the resolution to press the cause of Bangladesh in the face of adverse voting prospects were indicative of the dilemma they faced. Meanwhile, our purposeless lobbying has only muddled the water in which Pakistan was angling for her catch with smug satisfaction. The simple issue of membership has now been internationalised with Pakistan almost assured of extracting her demands concerning POWs, China quietly bemused at the vindication of her stance by the General Assembly and Bangladesh awkwardly caught between the cleftstick of self-defeating non-diplomacy.

The debacle of Bangladesh in United Nations has come about as a logical sequel to the maladroitness of the Foreign Office, subservience to alien pressures, overpowering sentimentality and unforgivable naivete. These are, however, the reflections of the internal spectrum of politics which is riven with opportunism, economic mismanagement, administrative primitivism and, above all, unprecedented lobbying to please their masters. The monumental mishandling of foreign policy and abject failure to resolve external contradictions or, even to minimise those in keeping with enlightened self-interest, have boomeranged. The POW issue rests squarely on our lap. Either we spill it or swallow it. Nothing could have been more gratifying for Pakistan.

Unity or fascism

If we go by the occult charm of the lucky seven or the oddity of a Baker's Dozen, opposition parleys for a left-democratic united front are now precariously suspended between these two numbers. Thanks to the postponement game of the ubiquitous Maulana, the five-party quest for a common stand on a united movement or an electoral alliance is now a painful drag. The eighth round of the parley is however scheduled for December 27 when they are hopefully expected to ring down the curtain on the business of consideration and formalise the effort by agreeing on a draft programme or an amended version of it.

If the trend of the earlier meetings is any indication, the prospects of the united front for launching a movement against growing fascism, black laws, expropriation and international reaction may still remain a distant dream. Meanwhile, the people have had a few clarion calls ranging from a long march to the burial of the Constitution, from peaceful resistance to civil war. But all these ended more in a whimper leaving the people guessing at what these exercises in abstractions really mean, other than creating a psychoses of violence without any politics. And then comes the promise of a united movement and the lengthening shadow of skepticism over the prospects of forging one including the much-needed identity of views on the issues and tactics involved. The big question is why?

The first and the most obvious factor resulting in this state of non-politics is the ambivalence of the components of the quintuple conglomerate on the question of movement and also elections. The behaviour pattern of the left-democratic leadership betrays a defensive posture and veiled opportunism, apart from inconsistencies.

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Maulana Bhashani's declaration of intent to contest all the 300 seats from his party platform in the coming elections and his simultaneous repudiation of the same, is certainly no solace to the new electors who want to look for an alternative, at least for the sake of creating a viable parliamentary opposition. It is not because his party has slim electoral prospects (given the intent and seriousness it still can provide a formidable opposition in the Parliament), but because his statements tend to cancel each other out with surprising consistency.

On the question of movement again, the credibility gap is further widening on account of the impetuosity in calling the tune to a movement like the food movement or the long march, and then suddenly sliding into mere pressure-tactics to the detriment of a common struggle. It seems the people have developed immunity from rhetoric, whatever the platform is, the ruling party or the opposition.

The second factor is the lack of comprehension of the lurking danger of fascism and the resultant anarchy flowing from a fascist thrust of the ruling group which does not yet have the benefit of organized and effective tools of repression. At the moment we only hear the rhetoric of fascism which only send a chill down our spine. But the ascendancy of the same in the ruling party is already indicative of their increasingly powerful grip over the party machine and subsequently through elections over the same machine. That they failed in May or June, or even before or afterwards, is no consolation. They may not retreat in their pursuit once they consolidate and organise the tools of repression. This danger can only be curbed through resistance, both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary. Organised resistance, and not anarchy, can combat fascism. Anarchy will only provide them which the excuse to strengthen their hands with total support from the forces of reaction outside the pale of the country. It seems that a section of the left democratic leadership is completely

unaware of the gravity of this danger and are resigned to the natural dynamics of the situation without being cognizant of what the spectre of anarchy can bring about in terms of retarding the pace of social revolution, and at times defeating it with strong-arm tactics garnished by the ideology of Mujibism.

The objective of the parliamentary opposition today is to defeat and weaken these forces through the elections. The emergence of a viable parliamentary opposition can scuttle the growth of this cancer inside the ruling party and make it more responsible and responsive. Renunciation of the electoral part at this point of time, when subjective preparation of the Marxists is just not there, will render the people helpless, apathetic, and will erode their will to resist. The entire gamut of parliamentary opposition including NAP (Muzaffar) and the JSD must realise this. No one can do it alone. The main enemy is not the mythical conspirator against the sovereignty of Bangladesh. Similarly for the Maulana and the communist colleagues, the main enemy is still not India. It is fascism in its incubation period. It has to be killed at its inception through a common electoral effort. The assumption should be that Awami League will come to power, but they should not have absolute power in order to be fascists. People are politically and psychologically ready to vote a powerful opposition in the Parliament. Experience tells them that it is through such a verdict that they can exercise their will over the government and keep the wolf at bay until such time as they can establish their own suzerain power.

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Fourteen unite for action

The formation of the Action Committee for the purpose of launching a country-wide movement on the basis of 15 points is at least a positive step.

The formation of an action committee headed by Maulana Bhashani and comprising seven political parties and seven other mass and front organisations on Friday evening may not in itself be an event of the year ending today. But it certainly signals a leap forward from the mire of non-politics and is, at the very least, a saving grace for the left-democratic leadership in the backdrop of a dismal and frustrating, if not scary, Nineteen Seventy Two.

Notwithstanding the relative strength, or the lack of it, of the motley crowd of the component parties or groups, the semblance of a positive outcome of what looked like an unending and infructuous parley, is certain to lift, albeit with some scepticism, the sagging morale of a desperate people.

What does this Action Committee mean in concrete terms? Does it really alter the situation which has been obtaining in Bangladesh in terms of fighting for a well defined objective? Can it really constitute the first and yet the most vital of all the steps towards a left democratic unity?

The formation of the Action Committee for the purpose of launching a country-wide movement on the basis of 15 points is at least a positive step. One may or may not be sceptical about the potency of this conglomerate in carrying out a sustained struggle outside the Parliament. But their potency will grow in direct proportion to the objective pressure flowing from the masses who are still in national bondage.

December 16, 1971 has not closed the chapter of servitude: it has only heightened our nationalist consciousness and people's democratic aspirations. The mist of quasi-independence, which has been created

by the rhetoric of the Establishment and the blaring of the captive press, needs to be cleared through a strategy of united movement. The formation of the Action Committee does not also necessarily allay the fear of its possible and at times inevitable failings in steadfastly steering the people through the thousands of pitfalls waiting ahead. But it does certainly rally the popular resentment around a left democratic podium on a minimum of specifics which are at the moment relevant to the context of the present struggle. The 15-point charter of the United Front surely meets those minimum, and the formation of the Action Committee is the first positive assertion that we have to fight for the charter in a unified manner.

The outcome of the parley is also going to alter the situation in so far as it unites the people even if it is to the extent of uniting 14 people in the shape of 14 parties and mass and front organisations. The individual strength of one or the other shall now be subsumed by a collective consciousness of the wretched millions of Bangladesh. As I said, even if the Action Committee means a tenuous amalgam of fourteen individuals sans any mass support (which is not so), it will draw its strength from the popular will to unite against the enemy, namely, fascism, international reaction, the emerging comprador bourgeois elements and the political impostors. It is definite that the accretion of strength to the united movement is going to discredit the loners in the opposition arena and cause large-scale desertion from such camps in favour of a united struggle.

The answer to the third question may not follow a straight line because of the exigencies of the situation. It is true that an utter lack of direction and purposeful unity among the left democratic parties and forces in the past one year has allowed the recurrence of the bane of communalism and even the gathering of right wing elements under the guise of opposition around the left democratic parties, particularly the NAP (B). This was

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The clearer the issues become, the stronger will be the position of the left forces.

possible because of the subjective confusion of some committed people in the left-democratic arena, a deliberate policy of the Establishment to encourage them by way of condoning Hindu chauvinism in the name of secularism, and finally the opportunistic and defensive politics of the communists aligning themselves with the Maulana. But such deviations can always be rectified with the projection of political and economic issues, as has been defined in the 15-point charter.

The more the movement gains a momentum, the more the malodorous slogan of communalism will recede into the background and the subjective content will be purified. The beginning of this is already discernible as the concept of unity and struggle has begun to concretise, however rudimentary the form and shape may be. The phantoms of communalism and communal elements are already beginning to feel uneasy as the perspective of united struggle is gradually drawing on the people and the left democratic parties. The clearer the issues become, the stronger will be the position of the left forces. And thus, the Action Committee has the potential of becoming the precursor of a revolutionary front under the aegis of the party of the working class and the peasantry.

Rough persuasion-eager capitulation

The sudden removal of the editors of the Dainik Bangla by an executive order of the Ministry of Information on the morrow of the new year may not be analogous to the unceremonious ouster of Mr. Abdus Salam, the former editor of Bangladesh Observer and the doyen of the journalist community in Dhaka. But it certainly is coincidental with whatever professional risks they hazarded in bringing out a special edition of the paper to report the killing of two student demonstrators on the first day of 1973, and the popular indignation over the incident. Ignominy apart, the two erstwhile editors have now found solace in the reflected glory of OSD's, which when deabbreviated, stand for Officer on Special Duty. Since bread, and if not always the buttered side of the bread, is the staff of life, the (dis)-appointed editors have reportedly joined the ordinal of OSDs.

The Dainik Bangla episode strips bare the many-splendoured myth of press freedom, the IPI report notwithstanding. It also defines the limits of government tolerance. Thus what had begun with Mr. Abdus Salam, with hardly anyone to shed tears, has now graduated, through a series of closures and vile threats, to this present state of taking the press by the scruff of its neck, spanking it at will and setting an example for the nationalised personnel in the service of the government press. The brashness of the act has, however, been tempered a little. The (dis)-appointment of the twain editors has been done advisedly, presumably by those who have inculcated the pseudo-sophistication of being correct and proper. Hence the status of OSD, and not the outright sack.

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The spurt of heroics which gripped the press circle for a while stayed as long as a bubble lasts.

The spurt of heroics which gripped the press circle for a while stayed as long as a bubble lasts. The feeble demo of the employees of Dainik Bangla petered out after an infructuous deputation to the Ganabhaban. The DUJ stirred a little only to find capitulation safer than a truncheon. And what has happened to the OSDs? Presumably they have been baited with foreign assignments and are waiting their turns of posting.

The story of capitulation by the press, individually as well as collectively, is a chronicle of self-degradation by the community of journalists as a whole. It had begun when some leaders of the community had gone about distributing the spoils of editorial positions in the abandoned papers among themselves and their friends, and struck a bargain with the government soon after independence. The government of the day found this willing collaboration a happy augury for the ultimate regimentation of the press and mass media in the interest of the government and the party. But, as at that time there were only three patriotic parties, namely, the Awami League, the NAP (Muzzaffar) and the CPB (Moni Singh), the partisans of all the three could happily coexist with each other, including some new converts to patriotism who changed their colours faster than a chameleon.

For these elite, press freedom was surely in existence but for the unseemly row created by some 'unpatriotic papers,' mostly weeklies. The government did not have to impose overt censorship on a willing community whose members were far too eager to prove their bona fides as loyalists to the Troika. That was why not a word was said by the leaders of the community when Mr. Abdus Salam was sacked by the stroke of a pen of the Acting Secretary of Information and when newspaper editors were arrested and a number of publications banned. The newly-elected President and Secretary of the Dhaka Union of Journalists found their hands full of unsavoury situations. They took courage to put across the bitter truth of the lack of press freedom

and to make the necessary protestations at the annual conference of the journalists only to hear the Prime Minister at what Holiday described as 'at his semantic worst'. The report said, 'The concept of a free press advanced so splendidly following the birth of a new nation was buried for good, last Sunday, under the worthy green sod of the Dhaka Press Club, the venue which is resplendent with the 25-year old history for liberty. The pressmen did have tears, but lacked courage to shed them.' ('Only Total Obedience' self, Holiday, dated July 23, 1972.)

To revert, the Dainik Bangla episode has its roots in the sudden rupture between the members of the once-happy Troika, that is the Awami League, on the one hand, and the Muzaffar NAP and CPB, on the other. But that does not mitigate the gravity of the issue involved, which is, whether the government can tamper with the press at will, and whether the journalists as a community will continue to bear with it and with the atrocious regimentation. Can't we still rise above personal opportunism and strive for something of value? Shall we go on capitulating before it is too late?

It is of course not true that all the leaders of the Fourth Estate or that journalists have turned into a flock of sheep for the pittance of favours. A columnist even dared to write in a captive paper: 'Asad (who was killed on January 20, 1969) came to me with a news item. I could not print it, The next day, our newspaper was ablaze' (Nirmal Sen Writing in Dainik Bangla under the pen-name of *Aniket*.) The columnist said this with much eloquence; and the nuances can hardly be lost on the readers. The journalists too can still rise to the occasion if they can all wear the red badge of courage and take a dare. The fortresses of power are not entirely impregnable.

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AL variants brought under control

But the crowd of political aspirants far outnumbers the prospective jobs; and the wound of disappointment may thus fester rather than heal in the coming days.

A nomination from the ruling party is always a coveted prize for the seekers of a seat in the Parliament. The nominee, once awarded the party ticket, complacently considers the electoral battle nearly won. This has always been so—whichever is the ruling party—at least for a spell; and the pattern recurs with surprising consistency everytime elections are here.

Not that elections have been a common feature in this part of the world. But the promise of polls—whether ‘grass-roots’ or under universal suffrage—rings bells of sweet enchantment in the ears of the ruling party’s nominees. One sympathises with the ordeal of the Awami League Parliamentary Board in their distribution of parliamentary jobs—300 of them—to the incumbents and the newcomers. They have done it well if we keep in view the various pulls and pressures operating within the ruling party.

The number of newcomers is 94 out of a total of 300 and the rest have been chosen from amongst over four hundred former members of the constituent assembly. The ALPB has, however, consoled the disappointed ones with the lure of other jobs like gubernatorial positions in the districts—which are well over sixty—and a number of subsidiary jobs in local self-government as enunciated by the constitution of the ruling party. But the crowd of political aspirants far outnumbers the prospective jobs; and the wound of disappointment may thus fester rather than heal in the coming days.

Whatever the nominations, or the refusal of nominations, may actually mean in terms of electoral

success, or otherwise, of individual nominees of the ruling party, the composition of the nominees has some distinctive features. The mainstream of Awami League and the traditional standard-bearers of the party have apparently been given more weight by selectors. Secondly, the Prime Minister was intensely involved in matters of nomination. The normal organisational procedures of recommendations from district or local units were waived in most cases. This must have been due to the intent of the Prime Minister to bring some cohesiveness to the parliamentary party in the new house and resolve the disparate tendencies within the Parliament for effectively undertaking a five-year lease of power.

The most significant aspect of nomination is the decline of Mr. Tajuddin and the containment of the AJL—the Awami Jubo League. The decline of Mr. Tajuddin, whose political opinion is often at variance with that of the Prime Minister, was a foregone conclusion. Yet one had thought that he would continue to exercise enough of authority in respect of nominating persons. In most cases he has been pre-empted as his open backing to one—more than one—applications failed to win nominations.

The surprise element, however, lies in the apparent failure of the AJL offensive to take the party machine by storm. The ominous ascendancy of AJL in the Awami League was becoming quite pronounced in the recent past. It was thought that they would claim a large share of nominations in the coming elections after their show of organised strength in the first week of January and subsequent days. In fact, the entire exercise looked like a determined attempt to establish their claim of inheritance to the Sheikh and seize the party leadership at the secondary level. The hartal call on 31st January was yet another demonstration of their organised power and a reiteration of their claim to political hegemony. The Jaiyo Sramik League, which is also headed by the

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Chief of the AJL, publicly proclaimed that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would pass on the mantle of leadership to Sheikh Fazlul Haq Moni if it was warranted.

Apart from serving some unsavoury political ends of the ruling party, the AJL and its various other wings have been ostensibly pressurising the Awami League to establish their supremacy. But their impatience was apparently their undoing as it set off immediate resistance within the Awami League and caused much embarrassment to the Sheikh himself.

Besides, ambition always leads to schism. It is reported that Tofael Ahmed, Political Secretary to the Prime Minister, and supposedly his understudy, is no longer on the same wicket with Sheikh Fazlul Haq Moni. Being equally ambitious and having emerged as a powerful political whiz-kid under the wings of the Prime Minister, he is bound to feel apprehensive of the unchecked ascendancy of Sheikh Fazlul Haq Moni.

The reasons being what they are, the fact remains that the composition of the nominees has certainly not been congenial to the ascendancy of the AJL inside the Awami League. It does not, however, mean that they will be ignored by the leadership of the ruling party. It only means that they will be used up to a point and not beyond—and mostly for purposes of thuggery.

Flames of fascism sweeping Bangladesh

If the absence of candidature from the opposition is the measure of the success of the ruling party, Bangladesh should be better off without the scheduled elections and all the trappings which go with it. The merry walkover of the ruling party's stalwarts in as many as 11 seats is not the point at issue. Nor is it any longer a tragicomic show for the people to behold the Prime Minister wreathed in laurels of victory when Chittagong is awash with blood and corpses. What is surprising is the utter mindlessness of a conceited power-that-be and a narcissistic leadership. In the backdrop of establishment violence and psychopathic obsession with power, the roll-call to idolatry and political evangelism has become the only ritual of a wretched nation.

The pre-election rampage by the ruling party has seemingly begun before the final countdown to their victory. The otherwise serene island of Bhola in the south touched it off with what the government news agency feigned to describe as 'popular' indignation against the redoubtable Major Jalil. The episode culminated in a one-sided staccato of automatics, and the siege of his motor-launch by the faithfuls, with the Jatiyo Rakhhi Bahini all set for the rest of the action.

And then came the inexplicable non-appearance of Dr. Azharuddin at the office of the returning officer on the day of filing of nomination. The kidnapping conveniently made way for two candidates from the ruling party to go challenged. The recurrence of the same phenomenon in as many as nine other constituencies relieved the constituents of the labour of voting. The

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leaders.

gullibles were enthralled by the providential sweep of the gods of our polity until, of course, the ruling party was accused of kidnapping, confining and scaring the nominees away in 19 seats.

The accusation is not merely from JSD alone. The NAP (Bhasani) and the NAP (Muzaffar) have also levelled similar charges, and demanded, along with the JSD, renomination in those places. The nonchalance of the government in the face of these open allegations is rather intriguing. The statement of Dr. Azharuddin in the Daily 'Ganakantho' cannot be brushed aside as pusillanimity. The press conference of A.S.M. Abdur Rab and the assertion by leaders of NAP (B) and NAP (M) have raised multiple questions in the minds of the electorate regarding the fairness of the electoral proceedings. What the General Secretary of Awami League will have us believe is not going down with the people any more than the demonstrable untruths preached by the propaganda machine of the government. The conspiracy theme is by now a hackneyed one—and so is the inviolability of the government leaders. The credibility of the government has vanished into thin air. And victory of the government in a farcical election cannot bridge that gap.

Forced mandate: The inevitability of a forced mandate does not necessarily indicate popular backing to a muscle-flexing government. Nor does it signify a continued forbearance by the suffering masses of an utterly corrupt government manipulated by the marionettes of international reaction. It merely reflects the uneasiness of the ruling party and its nominees over the hardening aversion of the masses to the ruling party, the charisma of the leader notwithstanding.

If reports from the Mofussil areas are to be believed, the polarisation of opinion against the ruling party is fairly discernible. The backlash against Awami League and its army of corrupt politicians has already occurred in Noakhali, Barisal, Jessore, Khulna and Dhaka

among other districts and in as many as 100 constituencies. The ruling party nominees are finding themselves at odds with popular feelings. Reports also have it that some ministers, including the Health Minister, could not as yet launch their campaign in their own constituencies. Frantic SOS's are being sent to the Prime Minister to salvage their sinking boats. When terror fails, they invoke the God.

The people expect the government to respond to the accusations levelled against the ruling party with due seriousness. Otherwise participation in the elections by the opposition parties, including independent candidates, will have to be abandoned. According to reliable sources, Major Jalil, the President of JSD, has already sent an emissary to Maulana Bhashani in Naogaon where the latter has hurriedly called a meeting of the NAP Parliamentary Board and the All Party Action Committee. The moot question to be thrashed out is likely to be the strategy of the left-democratic opposition against the Hitlerite tactics of the ruling party. So far all the demands of the JSD and the two NAP's have fallen on deaf ears. Neither the Election Commission nor the government has come out with any rebuttal of the charges until now. What has become of the government? Even their mentors across the border must be feeling embarrassed at the unseemly demeanour of their protege.

Whatever the government mass media may say, the faith of the people in the government's veracity has been totally shattered. A chain reaction in the psyche of the masses has set in. A little more of what the establishment is doing will now lead to a violent explosion despite failures to forge a meaningful unity for electoral as also extra-electoral struggle. The left democratic opposition now has one more chance to fulfil its duty to the people. A common strategy is the only answer. If they fail this time, the forces of reaction will win. The enslavement will then be total until such time as another upsurge sweeps across the length and the breadth of the country.

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Left may fail the people again

The failure of the democratic forces to unite for the limited objective of fighting the elections and the long-term objective of organised opposition is too stark to be ignored by the people.

The semantics of unity can at times, and invariably in our case, be treacherously deceptive. The All Party Committee of Action led by the National Awami Party of Maulana Bhashani is just a victim of this deception—confounded all the more by the petite-bourgeois chauvinism of the leading lights. Thus what looked like purposeful unity on December 31 last year—after the fifteen point charter had been announced at the Ramna Race Course—soon languished into frustrating nothingness. The pangs of disappointment only hurt the people. And yet, how many are concerned?

Whatever has happened to the All Party Committee of Action? The component groups have seldom met and yet its name is being invoked by all and sundry. But for the initial fervour to close ranks for a movement or for elections—as the case may be—the ‘all-party’, or to be more precise, the six-party pledge to unite is now a scrap of paper. The movement is a mirage, and the elections a divided wish. And this has happened in spite of the fascistic onslaught of the ruling elite, their total disregard of democratic norms and rules of conduct, the cannibalistic greed of a section of the ruling class and the shameful surrender of the nation’s sovereignty to expansionist and hegemonic powers.

The failure of the democratic forces to unite for the limited objective of fighting the elections and the long-term objective of organised opposition is too stark to be ignored by the people. The weight of fear that has benumbed the mass mind is yet to be lifted. On the other hand, the hardening attitude of the masses towards establishment-violence has not been harnessed by the

democratic opposition. The popular psychology is different; and the entire blame has to be borne by the opposition leadership. But who is to be blamed?

The failure is collective and not of individual's. There is no point in lamenting what ought to have happened. But it is time to look back and ponder on the guilt we all bear, and make amends before it is too late. The ice of fear has just begun to melt, and the thugs of the ruling party are already on the defensive. Maulana Bhashani, whom the country's democratic forces look upon as the patriarch, must now act and give the All Party Action Committee its true shape and vigour. The JSD which is still outside the united platform must heed this call because it is coming from the people—a people ravaged, betrayed and famished by vagaries of government and the shockingly perverted politics which have held the centre stage since independence.

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The Moguls are back

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The ritual has been gone through and the ruling party can now boastfully claim a mandate for Mujibbad. The electoral verdict has been a foregone one, although not unimpeachable in certain instances. No one expected it to be otherwise. Happy, happy, happy is the dominating refrain; and democracy will now hopefully grow like a money-plant in the dorms of political power.

Yet questions are being asked with varying degrees of trepidation, and not without reason, whether victory, like defeat, will be taken in good grace; whether governance rather than subjugation will mark the next five years. If the post-election message of the Prime Minister is taken at face-value, Bangladesh will certainly bask in the glow of his Promethean virtue. But if the practice of the past is any index, we all have lots of trouble in store.

It seems that our political elite suffers from an incurable sadism, which neither victory nor defeat can heal. They have seemingly learnt the techniques of repression more than the ethics of obligatory governance, and those of methods of reprisal more than democratic tolerance. And these aberrations obtain, despite the organisational superiority of ruling Awami League over the errant opposition parties, and the inevitable clean sweep that came in the wake of the polls. What intrigues the people is why the rulers had to rig the polls when it was not needed in most seats—and why obvious force was used to deprive the opposition of their well-earned seats in as many as a dozen constituencies. Now that the art of rigging has been practised well, the victory has been rendered something of a sham, and the polls a farce.

What would have happened if the elections were conducted fairly? It would certainly not have changed the electoral results substantially except for giving the opposition a few seats in the Parliament. The very fact that the ruling party would have got a thumping majority anyway does not justify tampering with the ballots on a stupendous scale to increase the percentage of votes and alleged forcible occupation of seats where the AL stalwarts were trailing behind. The instances of Dr. Aleem Al Razee in Tangail, Major Jalil in Bakerganj, Rashed Khan Menon in Bakerganj, Serajul Huq Mantu in Bakerganj, Shahjahan Siraj in Tangail, Suranjit Sengupta in Sylhet, Abdur Rahman in Tangail, Kazi Hatem Ali in Narsingdi, Mahmudul Huq in Jessore and a few others stand out glaringly to prove this point. The charges levelled by some of these political leaders are extremely disturbing. If a hundredth of what they say is true, nothing could be more farcical than the election skit enacted on March 7.

It may be sheer coincidence that wherever the AL candidates were locked in a desperate battle with opposition candidates, the TV and radio network suddenly stopped announcing the polls-results in these seats for hours and hours, until such time as the lead was comfortably wiped out at the fag end of counting as if by the touch of a magic wand. Both Dr. Razee and A.S.M. Abdur Rab charged that the results had to be vetted from Ganabhaban, and that necessary directives were sent out to see to it that the results were reversed. Only Mr. Ataur Rahman Khan escaped this tragedy, much to the chagrin of the ruling party leadership who had spared no efforts to defeat him. Even he has accused the government of strong-arm tactics, of kidnapping polling agents, of irregular counting and wholesale stamping of ballots with the aid of the Rakki Bahini.

Allegations apart, the whole thing appears strange. Stranger is the irrational determination of AL leaders to block the real opposition members, barring a few maverick AL independent candidates. The net result

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has been a one-party rule again, the weight of which is already breaking the back of the people of Bangladesh. Such is the weight that even a commentator over Radio Bangladesh had to begin his election commentary with the aphorism: 'The ruling party has finally occupied ('dakhal' in Bengali) the seats where the opposition candidates were leading comfortably.' The last nail in the coffin has, however, been driven when Saturday morning's newspapers said that the only NAP (M) candidate Mr. Mushtaque Ahmed Chowdhury of Cox's Bazar has lost to his rival by a margin of over two thousand votes. Mr. Chowdhury was earlier declared elected by 738 votes. Who knows what fate awaits Mr. Ataur Rahman Khan?

All this has been said only to prove that while the opposition parties have accepted the popular verdict despite unfair polls, the ruling party is in no mood to accept even if the verdict is otherwise in as few as a dozen constituencies.

Long live democracy, long live the Election Commission and long live the bogus voters. We will now truly have the peace that passeth all understanding. And in case there still are professional spoilers of sport, our 'patriotic newspapers' will not report their statements.

Democracy has been handed out to Bangladesh like a post-dated cheque signed from across the border. There are umpteen sweet uses of a post-dated cheque. But the encashment has to wait until we all turn into obedient boys and purify our sinful souls with the flame of Mujibbad.

Cabinet changes signal the tilt

The Durbar Hall in the Bangabhaban might not have sparkled in regal excellence last Friday when the new cabinet was being sworn in; but the lack of it was more than compensated by the doting adoration of the cream of the elite. The muffled expectancy of the incumbents and the new hopefuls was over in a moment as the ceremony began amidst loud applause. A 21-member cabinet was ushered into power to signal our imperious trek to democracy-a-la-Westminister after an election that never was.

The selection of ministers did not spring any surprise on the people. The speculators who were doing cautious name-dropping in the safe fora of official newspapers and mouthpieces of the AL pressure-groups, found it only slightly awkward. But that was all. The Prime Minister did the trick, and almost everyone was there. Only the portfolios were redistributed innocuously. But there lies the significance of it all.

If we talk in terms of antagonism, both friendly and inimical, the Russians, and by implication the Indians, will now have more bones to pick with the Americans in Bangladesh. Their adulation will tend to diminish with the exit of Mr. Abdus Samad Azad from the coveted chair in the Foreign Ministry and the meaningful bifurcation of the Finance and Planning Ministry. The hands that rocked the cradle in these two important areas are needed no more.

The pattern of portfolio-redistribution clearly underlines the fall of the 'socialist' heroes. But they should not feel downcast either. Mr. Abdus Samad can now have the Indian brand of socialism in the agricultural sector with American doles, and Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed can still go on shortchanging our currency with our friendly neighbour and barter the precious jute with the Russian benefactors for the

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What is important is, as commented on by Frontier of Calcutta, that 'the hilsa hooked and cooked by India and Soviet Union is now tasting delicious to the Americans'.

pittance of overvalued goodies. One only hopes that their zeal will be less sacrificial than before, and the country will come first before their mentors.

The assignment of the foreign office portfolio to Dr. Kamal Hussain is certainly a welcome change. The apron-strings policy which brought us inconceivable disasters in the international sphere may now be abandoned for a policy of enlightened self-interest within the bounds of the non-aligned, and the doors to sub-continental thaw may be hopefully unhinged.

The bifurcation of the Planning and Finance Ministry highlights the concern of the Prime Minister with planning, which is now in a complete mess. This Ministry, together with Finance, has been the bane of Bangladesh ever since independence. A thorough overhauling can still stem the rot. The hangover from the mass-mismanagement of this crucial Ministry, and, at times, deliberate sell-out of the country's economic interest in lieu of gratitude, will continue to persist. But then a start has to be made; and let's hope it is for the better.

In other areas, Mr. Qamruzzaman, Mr. Khondaker Moshtaque Ahmed, General Usmani have emerged stronger. Syed Nazrul Islam has retained, as expected, the number two position in the party hierarchy as also in the cabinet in respect of importance and power. Mr. Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury has seemingly been relegated to a lesser position. Sheikh Abdul Aziz's elevation to the Information Ministry has caused a bit of a surprise. In other instances, the status quo has been generally maintained in terms of importance, like those of Abdur Rab Serniabat, Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury, Abdul Malek Ukil, Yusuf Ali, Abdul Mannan and Matiur Rahman.

The only other person who has suffered a cut in his portfolio is Dr. Mafiz Chowdhury. But these are immaterial changes or adjustments. What is important is, as commented on by Frontier of Calcutta, that 'the hilsa hooked and cooked by India and Soviet Union is now tasting delicious to the Americans'. But wasn't it bound to be so under the present set-up?

An April gift for Bangladesh

The outline of the first Five-Year Plan for socialist construction of Bangladesh is expected to be made public sometime this month. It is thus generally assumed that the ditherings in the Planning Commission about the size and the objectives of the plan have been harmoniously resolved. And if the dateline is not changed again, the lay citizenry may hopefully receive an April shower for what it is worth.

The whole works are, however, being preceded by spectacular fanfare occasioned by what has been described as an international conference of aid-giving countries and agencies on the development of Bangladesh. Hosted by the Government of Bangladesh, the constellation of aid-givers will sit through a two-day declamation contest before they make up their mind to chip in their share of contribution. This is the euphemism of a consortium, which word, it appears, is slightly nauseating to our planners.

The Planning Commission in a highly selective press-briefing was at pains to recant a few things: first, that it is not a consortium meeting; secondly, that the conference has nothing to do with the five-year plan other than explaining the mere outlines of the plan, and thirdly, the question of debt-repayment does not have any relevance to the format of discussions with the aid-givers. The commission's sensitivity to issues of nomenclature, aid-commitment and debt-repayment is understandable, the first concern being somewhat of a pointless liturgy. But what is not understandable

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is their frail and, possibly, ineffectual attempt to obfuscate the obvious by sweeping the issues under the rug.

For one thing, no one can beat the planners in their rigmarole on socialist planning. To them political strings are only attached when the donors decide to make pledges on their own. Doubtless, the aspect of 'aid as imperialism' is hardly a hidden wonder. But the chairing of the meeting by the recipient government may only bolster the pride of economic prodigies without any loosening of the string which would inescapably be there. It is thus immaterial whether the consortium is formed before or after the hospitality of Bangladesh. The Bangladesh government will surely be asking for something between 600 million dollars and 855 million dollars in terms of food, commodity and project aids respectively. And the donors have doubtless made up their minds about the quantum to spare for recreating a socialist millenium in 'Golden Bengal'. The question now is: how generous will the aid-givers be? Indications are that, notwithstanding friendly persuasions by our redoubtable negotiators—who are very apt at eating words as well as figures—substantial commitments, subject to final endorsement by the respective aid-giving governments, may not be forthcoming.

But then we may tend to soften their hearts by offering an apology for an excess of socialist rhetorics. Didn't I hear someone pretty high up in the planning world say: 'Whatever we are doing is not rigid socialism but pragmatic capitalism'. Circumvention of socialist principles is not a difficult trick when Bangladesh is the land of charmed denizens. We may have to wait until the Paris Meet to know whether they have finally agreed to buy the cargo of development plan.

Commitments apart, the question of debt repayment is certain to remain a thorny one. It can be safely presumed that the aid-givers will pose this question whether or not it falls within the purview of the conference. The era of grants is over. Reparations on moral and material grounds will no longer aid us in preparing the plan as we had done with the one-year development plan. Hence, the issue will definitely come up (and possibly sorted out their way) before any future commitment is made by the aid-givers.

The Planning Commission's press briefing is thus an exercise in redundancy. Let's wait until the conference is over and we shall happily build the castle of socialism with what is naughtily described as imperialist aid. The outline of the plans await the final touches since it is on the bargain counter. Whatever the outcome, the lay citizenry will probably have it in sketchy bits rather than be surprised by joy.

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A new kind of class struggle

The truck scandal of '72, in which two contending groups of Awami League business hounds were locked in a desperate battle, is a forgotten story.

A number of minor employees were suspended recently in the Bangladesh Secretariat for alleged negligence in recommissioning a lift in the double-protected area. A well-knit group of Bangladesh Bank employees in Khulna was booked for alleged note-scandal involving lakhs of taka. Pilferers of Red Cross and relief materials and petty hoarders are being nabbed almost everyday by our watchful dispensers of law and order. The border area is taking toll of famished smugglers who are being shot like clay-pigeons. This is the famous 'Operation Catharsis' of the Bangladesh government to rid us of all the ills the society suffers from.

Let us present the other side of the scenario. A powerful agent of petroleum products recently obtained a consignment of diesel oil and allegedly sold the lot at Swarighat at a fantastic premium. Since it was detected, either by chance or on information, a police case was started. The case has presumably been hushed up or else the axe will fall on the poor policemen.

Expropriators of abandoned houses and business establishments are still riding the crest as they belong to the holy communion. Bungling in the purchase of rice and crude oil, resulting in the present crisis, is going unpunished because scapegoats are not plentiful in the world of blessed patriots. The money-game is being played with surprising impunity by those who have stakes on both sides of the border. The truck scandal of 1972, in which two contending groups of Awami League business hounds were locked in a desperate battle, is a forgotten story. The debacle in import was taken kindly because it involved a businessman-minister now out of office but not out of the Parliament.

Against this backdrop, the loud screams against the pro-Pakistan bureaucrats and minor officials, and the

riddance of defenceless wage-earners sound ridiculous. If not anything else, it is tantamount to political and administrative blackmail by the flower-children of Mujibbad and the tribesmen of the Awami League. A former chairman of a corporation was removed instantly because he refused to comply with the demand of a former MCA for the favour of a big deal. Secretaries and other functionaries are mortally afraid of disobliging the new political and economic overlords lest they are hacked without mercy at the whims of the new robber-barons who have nationalised the 'robbery of the nation.'

The irony of the situation lies in the counter-offensive of this new class of expropriators who are the precursors of the new comprador class. The battle-cry of this new class is cleverly phrased. The people have been called upon to wage a relentless class struggle against the middle-class and the wages-earners, who buy too much of rice or fuel oil and thus are guilty of hoarding; who are critical of an angelic government because their 'privileges' have been curtailed; who still nurture pro-Pakistani sentiments to sabotage the patriotic leadership. This strange theory of class struggle is the kernel of 'Mujibbad'.

But our rulers cannot also hide the obvious. They have successfully eaten up US \$1.3 billion in aid and grant, meant for succour and reconstruction. This is a record quantum to have been received by any country within the time-span of one year since independence. The money received by post-war Germany over a seven-year period is puny when compared to ours. A bunch of ingrates as we are, we are still not having any consideration for a government which can bag so much for the 'amelioration' of the people and eat up the money as well. Hence it is about time to weed out these rabble-rousers by launching a class struggle against the nagging middle class and fixed wage-earners, whose only pastime is finding fault with the patriotic leadership.

The psychosis of the political leadership and their hunt for scapegoats expose the basic weakness of the

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ruling class. Notwithstanding the massive 'mandate' in a purloined election, they feel jittery and insecure in the face of mounting popular pressure on a variety of issues, mostly economic and political. Now people are asking questions, often embarrassing ones. The latest question which is being asked is why the government has given time to substitute the currency notes printed in India? Why was it not demonetised in the usual fashion? What are our obligations to buy crude through India when India herself is not a crude-oil producing country? What has happened to the imported goods which were supposed to glut the market, and thereby bring down the prices of some commodities at least, beginning in January 1973, as forecast by the government? What has happened to the repeated assurances of regular supply of rice through rationing?

These are but some enumerations. The government has got to answer these questions rather than target the defenseless officials and government functionaries to cover its failures. The problem with our government is that they have no answers to these questions. The only thing they can do is to beg for forgiveness of the people for a series of broken promises, and the record for history's most shameless plunder. One would like to sympathise with the Prime Minister in his lamentations: 'What shall I do, everyone around me is a thief.' But who is to blame? Either he is too forgiving or he is too weak to tackle the thieves. And if they are not tackled now, they will turn into a pack of wolves.

These are the new compradores of Bangladesh who enact the ritual dance around the pulpit of Mujibbad. Meanwhile scapegoats will pay for the cannibalism of the hounds, and the people will perish under the weight of Mujibbad. The middle-class will be eliminated. What will remain of Bangladesh is a band of looters in a wasteland. It will then not even be worth a Sikkim for our benign neighbour.

The Bangladesh Syndrome

The repeated assertion by the ruling group that there is now no opposition in the country, consequent upon the rout of the opposition in the first general elections, reflects a mood which runs counter to whatever goes by the name of parliamentary democracy. It was, however, an impious wish, to say the least, that strangely came true either by default or by design. And it was possibly due to both.

The arrogance of power of the ruling group is but the manifestation of this abject reality; and the repressed consciousness of the people—desirous of change and radical transformation and yet in despair—represents the general political profile of Bangladesh.

Generally speaking, in more sophisticated precincts of power, the integration of the dominated class—which comprise the broadest spectrum of people—is attempted through a strategy of control, as well as of satiation of needs, on a real and material basis. Such a strategy, when perfected, leads to the alienation of the subjective urge for change by an apparent fulfilment of objective needs.

But this strategy works only until such time as (a) the internal contradictions within the system,—that is, the dominant class in possession of political and economic power—does not become acute; and (b) the crunch is never felt by the constellation of the dominated classes or groups, both subjectively and objectively, unless of course the exploitative character of the powers-that-be is exposed through an internalisation of exploitation.

In Bangladesh, the dominated classes are being attempted to be integrated with the system, as projected by the ruling group, not on the basis of control as well as satisfaction of the needs on a real and material basis but on the basis of perverted populism and sanctified violence.

Such a strategy, when perfected, leads to the alienation of the subjective urge for change by an apparent fulfilment of objective needs.

The popular basis of power is never a constant one. It is a variable which can tilt the balance against the dominant group now thriving under the sunshine of the leader's charisma.

Hence the attempt is likely to produce the dictatorship of compradore elements who will be growing increasingly fascistic at the slightest move from the opposition forces and who, in doing so, will look upon the neo-colonial expansionist/hegemonist powers for propping them up as surrogates.

Shifty Power-Base: To revert to the issue of opposition, the highly unreal and shifty power-base of the ruling group in Bangladesh again accounts for their suspicion of political opposition in the country. The absence of opposition is thus as much incidental as it is part of a design. It is incidental because the ruling party, which represents the dominant class at the moment, would have commanded a substantial majority even in an election. It is part of a design because the ruling party deliberately, and at times desperately, blocked the passage of opposition candidates to the Parliament who were maintaining a comfortable lead over the ruling party candidates in the elections. The post-elections bravura about the non-existence of the phenomenon of opposition is also due to the reason mentioned above.

The fundamental problem, however, remains. How does the ruling group harmonise the repressed consciousness of the masses of Bangladesh with their state of power in the absence of their capability to control and satiate the subjective and objective needs of the people on a very real and material basis? The popular basis of power is never a constant one. It is a variable which can tilt the balance against the dominant group now thriving under the sunshine of the leader's charisma.

If this variable is taken away, the entire facade of political and economic power will crumble in no time. Hence in order that the objective reality does not propel the dominated classes to subjectively equip themselves for bringing about a radical change in the status quo, the strategy of control will be based on perverted populism as epitomised in Mujibbad, and sanctified violence unleashed through such instruments as the Rakhi Bahini and the private armies reared by the ruling group.

The Bangladesh Syndrome-II The Spectre Of Mujibbad

Bangladesh today presents a scenario of desperate hopes and shattered dreams. The euphoria that had gripped this nation soon after independence melted away as quickly as a bubble would burst; the myth of independence instantly produced its own pantheon of gods and demi-gods; and the people were asked to render a hymn to an eternal and inviolable order.

Nowhere the dichotomy between the dominant group and the dominated ones is so flagrant as it is in Bangladesh. It cuts across the general matrix of a stratified society in which the power-elite, by virtue of their control over the state machine and the production processes, have embarked on an unprecedented adventure of exploitation. It is as unabashed as it is ruthless. But it has its own pitfalls and inherent weaknesses.

The hold of the power-elite of Bangladesh over the state-machine is, however, no longer that of an usurper. Because the legitimacy of power, both in constitutional and bourgeois democratic parlance, is legally constituted. But the control over the production processes or the means of production is plainly unorthodox. It has been effected through the fiat of socialism and large-scale expropriation by a group whose economic and class-base is still ill-defined, if not totally undefined.

They are neither the 'kulaks' nor the grocers—the landed gentry or the emergent national 'Bourgeoisie'. Nor do they as yet represent the bureaucratic elite representing an 'entente' with the above-mentioned twain. They represent almost exclusively a new class bound by political ethnocentrism, verging on a kind of modern-day tribalism. The traits are unmistakable, and so are the rituals.

The lack of a coherent economic and social basis of this dominant group and its aggressive desire to cling to

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power and accumulate wealth, to the exclusion of or in alignment with the extant exploitative classes, have given rise to what can be called polygenic exploitation and anomalous misrule.

On the other hand, the objective reality in Bangladesh is hardly congenial for an unchecked economic and political hegemony of the dominant group which is highly clannish and almost tribal in character. Their problem thus boils down to the compulsion, both economic and political, as to how to integrate the repressed consciousness of the Bengali polity with their state of power.

The very frail and superficial nature of the social and economic foundation of the dominant group and its heterogenous composition have placed them on a very weak wicket. Nevertheless, the political and economic greed of the dominant group is not sated in the least. Contrarily, it is assuming almost cannibalistic proportions with each passing day.

Stratagem of control: Against this particular backdrop, as sketched above, we have to understand the stratagem of control as employed by the dominant class over the dominated ones. The repressed consciousness of the people of the dominated classes cannot be expected to stay where it is at this given time. Because both subjectively and objectively, it is like a cauldron that can blast off the lid at the slightest spark. Hence as mentioned in last week's article, the integration of the dominated classes which are at once in the state of ferment and sublimation, is being attempted not through the usual strategy of control and satiation of objective needs, but through the screen of a mystifying ideology based on perverted populism and blood-chilling terror unleashed by institutionalised violence. The first is represented in the so-called conception of Mujibbad and the second in such instruments of terror as the 'Rakkhi Bahini', 'Lal Bahini', 'Volunteers' and the like.

Apparently, Mujibbad or Mujibism is the four state principles of Democracy, Socialism, Secularism and Nationalism rolled into one. If we have chosen to call a particular attire the Mujib Coat, which is as old as that of

Jawaharlal Nehru, it may be puerile and yet a self-satisfying rhetorical exercise to invent Mujibism in concepts which are as old as political science itself. But such innocence is hardly the virtue of the inventors. The innovation of Mujibism has thus got to be viewed in the light of the character of the dominant group which has expropriated the means of production and the production-processes and is in a mad rush to advance its class-selfishness.

I had discussed these symptoms in two consecutive articles on May 7 and May 14, 1972 ('Tilt Towards Fascism Growing More pronounced' and 'Stormtroopers Poised For An Attack On the Left'). To quote: 'There is an element of conscious design in all that is being said and done. Already overt attempts are made to equate the government with the nation to be followed by such simple equations as government-national party-leader. Or shall we call it the latencies, which lurk within the party claiming to represent the whole nation and irrevocably bracing itself for a mad thrust to perpetuate the hold of the privileged political elite in a totalitarian fashion to the exclusion of the working class, the peasantry, and the broad gamut of the middle and lower middle classes?

'When the class-selfishness of this new elite of expropriators of properties is extended to what has been described as cannibalistic proportions, the niceties of dissimulated dictatorship through Parliament will stand to unabashed abrogation. This is what in political history is known as the foetus of fascism—an oppositionless society propped up with the instruments of terror designed over the years and fed by fake anti-capitalist slogans.' (Self. 'Tilt Towards Fascism...', Holiday, May 7, 1972).

But such schemes cannot succeed without the necessary 'ideological embellishments, however untenable those may be under theoretical scrutiny. Hence Mujibism. It has been invented to lend the doctrine the necessary metaphysical whiskers to cover the ugly face of evil'. (Self. 'Stormtroopers Poised...Argentinian: parallels:...', Holiday, May 14, 1972).

The second rationale behind such ideological imposture is to herd the people like a flock of sheep and

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The implications of such statements that there is now no opposition in the country and that the electoral victory is a mandate for Mujibbad emerge clearly when we weigh those on the scale of present-day political psychology of the dominant class in Bangladesh.

use the slogan for purposes of inquisition of the demurrers. The implications of such statements that there is now no opposition in the country and that the electoral victory is a mandate for Mujibbad emerge clearly when we weigh those on the scale of present-day political psychology of the dominant class in Bangladesh. A parallel of a sort can be found in the highly personalistic nationalism developed by the Argentinian dictator Juan Peron who had said that he was the 'material representation and the living incarnation of the Argentine nation'.

But what Peron did, with his highly tactical manouvres and personal charisma for a period until he was thrown out, is now a matter of history. Peron's rule (1945-55) after World War II coincided with the most prosperous economic period the country had ever known. Argentina's war-time neutrality stimulated the country's foreign commerce and encouraged the further development of domestic industry. He satisfied the capitalist class to the extent that it was in his 'golden age' 'when they finally rose to political and economic supremacy over the landed oligarchy, when the power of foreign imperialists was curtailed and when the working class was happy and (more importantly) obedient.'

On the other hand, the working class remembers the same Peron regime as the 'golden age' for workers—'an era of nationalism and economic reform.'

The analogy is far-fetched and yet somewhat relevant. Peron's highly personalistic nationalism and the power-base created by him soon crumbled, notwithstanding the initial success in the control and satiation of the subjective as also the objective needs of the people of Argentina in the immediate post-war period. In Bangladesh such attempts to opiate the people with mystifying ideology in the backdrop of loot and plunder by the dominant group are bound to become a perversion of power. As stated earlier, since the ruling group can be likened to a tribe where kinship plays a stronger role than economic and social base, Mujibbad can be termed as the voodoo magic of the dominant group.

The Bangladesh Syndrome—III

A Scheme Gone Wild

The tentacles of Mujibbad are now ominously spreading into the body-politic of Bangladesh. The fetish has caught on and so has the frenzy. Staged demonstrations by the organised wings of the ruling group, official celebrations of a series of 'historic landmarks', routine worship of the philosophical cult by the government-controlled mass media and daily rituals of the devotees at the Ganabhaban make a deafening choir of all praise to God and His revelations. The faithful are rewarded with the boons of the bountiful, and the recalcitrants await the penalty. The large mass of the people who have little use for the abstractions of Mujibbad look helplessly at a grim future that threatens to devour their wretched existence.

The pattern is familiar. But it is not simply the aberrations of a psychophantic crowd. There is a method in this madness—a method which lacks precedent even in the most authoritarian society. As discussed in the earlier two articles, Mujibbad is the calculus of the power-elite invented to weigh and secure its usurpations on the scale of other people's martyrdom. It can be likened to an article of memorandum of a cahoot of expropriators who are trying to monopolise their control of the state-machine and the production-processes through devious means and fake anti-capitalist slogans. On the other hand, it is being used for purposes of sanctions against and inquisitions of the sceptics who refuse to discover socialism in the primitive strategy of accumulation of capital by a handful at the expense of the nation's labour. The Awami League economists must now be shedding tears for the love's labour that has been lost. But that is another story.

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This special force came to be known as Mujib Bahini which was raised by an Indian General outside the control and the orbit of the Bangladesh defense forces or even the highly obliging Mujibnagar government.

The manifesto of Mujibbad, which is still up the sleeves of its creators, may offer an interesting study of the strategy and tactics of the dominant group to perpetuate their hegemony in Bangladesh. The blueprint of the scheme was carefully laid out by those who have a stake in power in the new-born state in companionship with their masters across the border.

The scheme envisaged the creation of an elite force of politicised armed cadres in the then Bangladesh defense forces otherwise known as the Liberation Army. This special force came to be known as Mujib Bahini which was raised by an Indian General outside the control and the orbit of the Bangladesh defense forces or even the highly obliging Mujibnagar government. Those who have fought in the war of independence under the command of the Mukti Bahini still recall the bitter feud that had gone on in those fierce days of fighting in 1971.

The creation of the Mujib Bahini, which has been later disbanded as a matter of formality, highlights the anxiety of a section of the ruling group to supersede the fighting forces in the Mukti Bahini with the active backing of the Indian military machine.

This parallel force was thus created on the basis of so-called Mujibbad to (a) contain the liberation army in case the war of independence became a protracted one, and (b) to counter-balance the radical social forces unleashed through the process of guerrilla warfare. The third objective (for which it developed contradictions even with the Mujibnagar government) was to lie in wait for a takeover of the state-machine by claiming direct inheritance from the Sheikh who had been in the custody of Pakistan and whose release had not been a certainty until after some time since December 16, 1971.

Internal contradictions: Things, however, went sour for the schemers as internal contradictions within the fold of the leadership of the Mujib Bahini erupted into open conflict in May 1972, culminating in the disintegration of the once-monolithic organisation the following month. The rebels not only broke away from

Mujib Bahini and its front organisations like students' League and Jatiyo Sramik League, they summarily renounced Mujibbad and opted for what they chose to call 'scientific socialism.'

Meanwhile, objective conditions turned unfavourable for the application of the tactical line adopted by the votaries of Mujibbad. The failure of the mad thrusts in the industrial belts by the Lal Bahini-an auxiliary instrument of terror-and the AL Volunteer Corps, and the limited success of left-baiting West-Bengal-style made them pause a little. The schism in its ranks also sapped its vigour and strength notwithstanding the fullest backing from the political government. Besides, the Lal Bahini also became an embarrassment to the government itself when it clashed with the law and order authority in Khulna around the same time. But that was only a temporary respite.

I have recounted the above to clear the mist of confusion created by the propaganda machine of the votaries of Mujibbad and to bring out the character and alignment of the section of the ruling group which is on the rampage now. The initial setback suffered by this group soon after independence resulted in the temporary suspension of its allied plans aimed at bringing all other sectors of our polity down to their knees. The Mujibisation of the administration, police, army, educational institutions, trade and commerce and the like is now being attempted once again in the name of consolidation of independence.

The mechanics of this ideological perversion are highly dubious. It is openly intimidatory as it is clandestine. That is why we often note that the nice trappings of bourgeois democratic norms are dispensed with when it comes to the compulsion of retaining economic and political hegemony, whatever the cost. Having inherited the control over the means of production and political power, the ruling group is still suspicious of its natural allies in business, among the big land holders and bureaucracy.

The business class, which is thriving as much in Bangladesh as they were doing before, is thus feeling

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insecure unless they have the protective screen of Mujibbad. (The battle of the two chambers-the Dhaka Chambers and the Federation of Chambers-is not a battle for securing business interests for specific groups, but a rat-race for currying favour with the new political elite). Because in the changed circumstances of Bangladesh, the business interests and the exploitative groups can carry on unhindered provided they don the mantle of Mujibbad. Most of them are yet to master the art of flexibility as was and is being practised by the doyen of the nouveau-bourgeoise-the House of Zahurul Islam-with surprising success.

As a result, the normal ethics of business and capital accumulation are thrown to the winds, and the class-selfishness of the new expropriators often clash with their own kinds. (The instance of Ahmed Fazlur Rahman's plight at the hands of the private army of the new class of expropriators is highly educative).

The same pattern recurs in all other spheres. In the sphere of administration—both civil and police-Mujibbad is the key to survival. As long as an officer will keep his eyes shut to the economic and political misdeeds of the flower children of Mujibbad, he remains secure in his chair. The police personnel, whether at the top or the bottom, can retain his job as long as he can recover arms without stirring the nest of the Mujibbadis, crack down on corrupt and anti-social elements without hurting the real and powerful ones and so on and so forth. Resultantly, he neither recovers arms nor hauls up the corrupt and anti-social elements. Because there is none who can dare carry illegal arms or rob others with impunity excepting the votaries of Mujibbad.

The whole country and the nation are now caught in this vicious circle, and the entire social fabric is almost falling apart in the process. Sanctified violence and sanctified robbery are the order of the day. The alienation of the ruling group is complete. And the more the alienation, the more desperate will its actions be. Their only ally in this desperation is the Jatiyo Rakki Bahini-the SS of the ruling group.

The Bangladesh Syndrome-IV The Face Of Terror

Terror has many faces and myriad functions. It is spooky and nightmarish, deadly and tortuous. It is a knock on the door in the small hours, as in those interminable days of 1971. It is the frightful disappearance of the living ones into the death-trap of the gestapo. Terror is the assassin's bullet and hangman's noose. Terror is kill and overkill—it is the persecutor of the soul, the repressor of consciousness. Terror is a six-letter word that petrifies human existence.

Bangladesh has lived with terror from the colonial times through the semi-colonial interregnum, climaxing in the genocide of '71. The face of terror changed from the veiled to the bare in a historical continuum where the people were always at the receiving end. The application of terror also varied contingent upon the character and compulsion of the ruling group. The instruments also underwent changes, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in direct relation and proportion to the strength or otherwise of the mass-base for social change. But terror continued to remain as the chief weapon in the armoury of the Establishment to force the people into submission.

In the geo-political context of independent Bangladesh, the terror of the Establishment has become stark and naked. The language of weapons graduated into institutionalised violence and semi-official violence, as desperation gripped the ruling group in its near alienation from the people. As stated in the earlier articles, with the abject failure of the ideology of Mujibbad based on perverted populism, the accent on terror has become pronounced in the ruling group in Bangladesh. The new

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class of expropriators who have been on the ascent in the Establishment, initially found a handy tool in Mujibbad for advancing their class-selfishness. Apart from the ideological halo that it imparted, it gave them the necessary scope to use the charismatic image of the leader and the super-rhetorics of socialism to secure their interest. But as the sweep of perverted populism failed to integrate the repressed consciousness of the Bangladesh polity with the state of power of the ruling group, they increasingly leaned on the strategy of control through terror.

But such a stratagem is predicated upon the existence of such organised instruments as the police, the army and the para-military forces. The character of these instruments is evolved in accordance with the character of the ruling group or class which controls the state-machine. On the other hand, notwithstanding the existing outfit of army and police, the ruling group is not sure of their loyalty, not to the state, but to the exclusive group interest. Because, unlike the heritage of 1947, the army and the police in Bangladesh had fought a patriotic war and to that extent ceased to be mercenary.

As a result, the ruling group in Bangladesh, which has emerged as the new propertied-class at the expense of the nation's labour, had to design new instruments to advance their interests and safeguard their usurpation. The traditional allies and tools had to be cast away of necessity in favour of the new ones. These new tools are of two categories: (a) the semi-official private armies of different varieties like the Lal Bahini, the volunteer force, etc., and (b) a para-military organisation like the Jatiyo Rakhi Bahini (JRB).

Creation of JRB: The need for a para-military force in supersession of the existing state-apparat is thus inherent in the scheme of the ruling group. The JRB has thus been created as a part of the scheme of the ruling group. Unlike the private armies, the para-

military organisation is an adjunct of the state. The creation of such a force is neither simple nor routine. The ruling group cannot by itself create such a sophisticated machine without external help. It can also be safely presumed that the JRB has been created to perform such tasks as are outside the purview of the army or the police.

Now what are these tasks? These are purported to be the maintenance of internal security as interpreted by the ruling group and its backers across the border. Hence the JRB in its dispensation has to be politically indoctrinated. The charges, levelled so far against the activities, excesses, brutalities and political proclivities of the JRB by the opposition leaders and individual sufferers, clearly point to the mala fide aspect of its inception and objective. And by all indications, the JRB is suspected to be the institutionalised version of Mujib Bahini, if not in composition, at least in political terms.

The question of external involvement in the formation of JRB is difficult to rule out. (The military establishments in the neocolonies are always the hand-maidens of imperialist powers who have a stake in the status quo. Because indigenous resources of such countries hardly permit the creation of sophisticated military or para-military establishments which, when necessary, play the tune in the war games and is used for repression during the period of disengagement from military pursuits.) The statement within parenthesis is only to prove the point that the creation of such forces is not possible without active external aid, either open or clandestine. The external power involved in this instance cannot but be our benign neighbour who has abiding interest in the political configuration of Bangladesh.

It is interesting to note here that while the concept of a viable defence for Bangladesh was thrown

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out of the window for objective reasons (political prejudice and neighbourly advice apart), the kitty for the JRB was not found wanting in required funds for raising a 17,000- strong special force. It only establishes the fact that the purpose behind the creation of the JRB is political and that there is a collusion of interest between the ruling group in Bangladesh and the government of India.

There is no denying the fact that the inception, composition and management of the JRB are shrouded in mystery. There are wild speculations in Bangladesh about this exclusive and autonomous para-military organisation. One would not like to, and yet, one will discover a kind of affinity between this instrument of terror and the Central Reserve Police (CRP) of India which had been and still is on rampage in terror-stricken West Bengal. The brutalities of the JRB operations, its total lack of sensitivity to popular feelings paint it as a dehumanised counterpart of the CRP. The JRB is terror, a spectre created to benumb the people, to penetrate and neutralise political bases of revolutionary struggle, and thereby, safeguard the ruling class in Bangladesh and their guardians in India.

The Bangladesh Syndrome-V

The Visage Of Counter-revolution

A parallel exists between the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini (JRB) and the Central Reserve Police of India (CRP) in so far as the methods of operation and persecution are concerned. Those who have undergone the traumatic experiences in occupied Bangladesh in 1971 may as well be inclined to extend the parallel to the dreaded organisation called the Service Special Group (SSG) of the Pakistan Army. There is a kind of organic unity running through the entire gamut of such organisations, irrespective of countries and nomenclatures.

Because, essentially these are the instruments of counter-revolution for the defense of capitalism in advanced capitalist countries as also for the fortification of governments in neo-colonies subservient to imperialist powers. Here the term imperialism connotes not only the bastions of monopoly capital but also such powers as are designated as social imperialists and sub-imperialists. The latter terminology is a recent innovation to signify the expansionist proclivities of the Indian ruling class.

The word counter-revolution, like revolution itself, is a much abused word. Like socialism, it has become the stock-in-trade of the ruling group or class, and is often used as a scarecrow to ward off the potential surge of social revolution. The intensity of counter-revolution increases in direct proportion to the strength of the mass base for social change. Counter-

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revolution, as the term suggests, is the antithesis of revolution and employs sanctified violence for putting down revolutionary consciousness and struggle aimed at changing the feudal, semi-feudal and capitalist production-relations (as the case may be) for a socialist order. But it assumes different dimensions in different situations and puts on varied masks to hide its ugly face.

'Counter-revolution', as Herbert Marcuse puts it, 'is largely preventive'. Here there is no recent revolution to be undone and there is none in the offing. And yet, the fear of revolution which creates the common interest links the various stages and forms of counter-revolution.

On the other hand, in the socio-political matrix of the Third World, counter-revolution is openly aggressive, because it has to contend with the highest degree of revolutionary potential and, at times, with revolution itself. That is why it is unabashed in its brutality, and archetypical in its repressive mechanism.

The Genocide '71 in Bangladesh by Pakistan Army clearly brings forth the hideous character of the organisations of counter-revolution like the Pakistan Army. The compulsion of holding the people down and the counter-violence of a diffused, and yet, a highly infectious insurrectionary struggle, propelled the military-bureaucratic oligarchy to commit indiscriminate massacre. And this was done notwithstanding the fact that our leadership was as much eager to offset the revolutionary violence of the people against the height of national repression by innocently walking into the 'talking trap' laid by the Pakistan rulers, and flaunting the virtues of a non-cooperation, non-violent movement.

The above has been stated only to underline the extreme manifestation of the working of the organisations of counter-revolution like that of the Pakistan Army. The context was different from today's. It was the context of national repression and internal colonialism which had its unique manifestation in the

then East Bengal. Since then, history has stood witness to the beginning of a people's war in Bangladesh, and the repudiation and abortion of the same by the midwives of counter-revolution. But that is another story and a long one at that.

To revert to the original proposition, the JRB is similarly an organisation of counter-revolution to pre-empt—because it is beyond prevention—the revolutionary upsurge of what is commonly known as the national democratic revolution. As briefly mentioned in the earlier article (The Face of Terror), it was created in supersession of the traditional tools of repression, that is, the police and the army. The reason being that these two organisations were no longer successor institutions in the strict sense owing to their participation in the War of Independence.

In fact, a large section of these two institutions played the role of vanguard in the armed resistance in close comradeship with the people and the young guerrillas who instantly joined forces with the trained fighting elements. That is why we have always noticed that the fighting forces in the War of Independence were always held in suspicion by our leadership, particularly those belonging to Mujibnagar. Thus, a nation-in-arms was soon denigrated to a nation of thugs through a malignant campaign of the political leadership and their co-sponsors in the Indian ruling class. The Mukti-Bahini boys were gradually eliminated from the sphere of national reconstruction. The so-called National Militia was formed only to be disbanded to frustrate the human materials who fought with their blood. The Village Security Forces were raised from among the freedom fighters, once again to be scrapped by the political government, because the purpose behind the creation of such organisations was not the absorption of the fighting youth for productive purpose. It was to rear a counter-revolutionary organisation for unleashing terror and repression on

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The JRB is controlled and directed by Indian Establishment through its many trainers for the purpose of the containment of a national democratic revolution.

the people as envisaged by the Indian military machine and their collaborators in the ruling group. The JRB is the child of this diabolical scheme, and its recruitment was not done from among the freedom fighters lest they refuse to acquiesce in or to participate in the violence of counter-revolution.

The JRB is supposed to be the Prime Minister's own force under the cover of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Principal secretary to the Prime Minister is supposedly the supreme civilian boss of this organisation. But ironically, it is not so. The control lies elsewhere. Organically and functionally, it is a photo-copy of the Central Reserve Police of India. The difference is while the latter is under the direct control of the ruling class of India, the former, that is the JRB, is controlled and directed by the Indian Establishment through its many trainers for the purpose of the containment of a national democratic revolution. One wonders if the Director of JRB is in the know of the goings-on inside the organisation he presides over.

Antagonism: It is interesting to note that the JRB has created antagonism with all the other strata of the administrative and state machine, particularly the army, the police and the bureaucracy. (The non-commissioned officers on deputation from Bangladesh army to the JRB have returned to their parent organisation consequent upon their incompatibility with the set-up in the JRB. Instances of clashes with the police are plenty, and misdemeanour with army personnel has also sparked off trouble in various places, particularly Chittagong. The JRB operations in the district and subdivisional towns or villages are carried out independently without reference to local administrative or the law and order authorities. I refrain from citing specific instances, which are galore, and which even find their way into print in the official and semi-official newspapers, not to speak of the remnants of the opposition.)

Now is this antagonism deliberate or just inherent in the situation? I consider it as much deliberate as it is inherent. Hatred is the sine qua non of violence. Dehumanisation of the organisation of counter-revolutionary violence is effected with precise planning in order to turn a humane person into a robot, unresponsive to the cries and agonies of the victims. Hence, the recruits are taught to be vicious and brutal. They are injected with the sense of irredeemable power. They are taught to create hatred against themselves by hating others so that the human feelings are erased from their mind. The grim stories of Rakkhi Bahini persecution can only be matched by the horrors of persecution by the SS of Hitler, CRP of India, SSG of Pakistan, the fanatic militants of Indonesia and the like.

Let me enumerate some of the instances of JRB operations and the horrors that go with it. These are recent instances. The pre-election rampage in various parts of Bangladesh by the Rakkhis in close collaboration with the AL thugs are not being recorded here. According to a report: The JRB once again struck terror in Khulna and took a toll of two innocent lives (second week of April, 1972). Thus within a span of four months five deaths occurred at the hands of the Rakkhi-Bahini. The report adds: the victims—Ashraful Islam, a student, and Ferdous Sheikh, a small businessman—were taken in by the JRB on mere suspicion that they possessed unauthorised weapons. A thorough search of their premises revealed nothing incriminating. When these two along with four other suspects were brought to Daulatpur Police Station, about three miles from the village, at dead of night, the Daulatpur police found to their horror that two of the six suspects were not alive. The other three casualties at the hands of Rakkhi Bahini were Abdul Jabbar and Abdul Khaleque of Salpa Bahirdia under Khulna Police Station and

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Kamalesh Chandra Das, a political cadre belonging to the Krishak Samity. The former two were beaten to death for their alleged complicity in the murder of an allegedly corrupt AL member. And Kamalesh was shot dead while in their custody.

There are other instances of which I record some samplings. Chhatra-League (Rab-Siraj) worker Nargis Siddiqui was taken in by a commander of the Rakkhi Bahini, B.K. Sarkar, in Rajshahi district. Her dead body was found in a sack some time later. Another JSD worker, Chunnu, is now in Pabna jail in a condition of mental derangement after going through the torture of the Rakkhis.

These instances which are hair-raising bring back memories of the army atrocities in Bangladesh, and God help us, the CRP killings in West Bengal. The vocabulary is also strikingly similar. It is the miscreants they are killing and eliminating. The term 'miscreant', according to the Establishment and its masters can be applied to Maulana Bhashani, Md. Toaha and Abdul Matin. And today, the entire people are miscreants as in the Pakistan days; Bangalees were miscreants as a nation.

The JRB is thus an instrument of counter-revolution on which even the indigenous ruling group has no control. It is an extension of the CRP to safeguard an obliging government of the Indian ruling class and the expansionist interests of Indian sub-imperialism. It breathes death and horror. Anyone can be the victim, you or me. And we shall be known as miscreants in the books of the Bangladesh Establishment. It is about time the government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman enlightened itself and the people about the working, composition and financing of the JRB. For it may even turn against it lest it choose to pursue an independent course.

The Bangladesh Syndrome-VI

The Genesis Of Violence

When violence of the establishment or that of its terror brigades assumes demoniacal proportions, counter-violence is the only healer of the wound the ruling group inflicts. When professional killers are set upon the people with the sanction of the powers-that-be and are acclaimed as the vigilantes of the nation's independence, the ideal of heroism cannot be saved for the other side. It produces its antidote in the form of the violence of resistance. Bangladesh is no exception nor are its people. Slowly but surely, they have begun to rediscover their soul in their own violence which can equal or defeat the violence of the status quo.

When laws and ordinances are framed to perpetrate social, political and economic injustice, defiance of law or absence of order is also symptomatic of the political mood obtaining in a specific situation. The different dimensions or manifestations of this mood of defiance may not always be political. At times, the manifest phenomenon of anarchic lawlessness flows from a sense of immunity usually enjoyed by the goons of the establishment. At other times, it is utilized as a convenient pretext by the ruling group to crack down on the opposition.

The rule of violence or the absence of order in Bangladesh has thus got to be viewed in its totality. It is the correlate of political piracy and economic banditry in which the ruling group and its co-sharers have excelled singularly. It is the prodigal offspring of a diabolical establishment which has turned Bangladesh into a wilderness of wasteland. And thank goodness, while the violence of resistance is gradually growing to counter

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the ruling group gone amuck, the establishment violence has begun to take a toll of its own grandiose edifice on account of bitter in-fighting over the spoils of power and privilege. The Frankenstein of semi-official bands of storm-troopers is now threatening to devour its very creator, that is the ruling group. The genesis of violence, inherent in the political strategy of the ruling group, is now in control of the state machine and the production processes. Emerging as they did as the only propertied class in Bangladesh in the vacuum by the ouster of the Pakistani exploiters, the ruling group was desperate to secure their usurpations (a) by way of regimentation of the people on the precepts of an ideology based on perverted populism and (b) use of terror and sanctified violence-institutional as well as semi-official.

Private instruments: The semi-official or private instruments of violence are represented by such organs as the Lal Bahini, the Awami League Volunteer Force and the Awami Jubo League. For all practical purposes, these adjuncts of the ruling party are the tools of coercion and terror, and are manned largely by professional musclemen, killers and hoods. Add to this conglomerate the new crop of political stormtroopers whose immunity from law is guaranteed.

The ruling group has even surpassed Monem Khan, the hated protege of Ayub in the then East Pakistan, in their patronisation of elements who should generally be the hangman's delight. These three so-called organisations are again the creation of different interest-groups within the ruling party which have amassed wealth and privileges at the cost of the nation's labour. And as such, they do not represent the whole gamut of the ruling party. But they undeniably draw their strength and power from the highest quarter just as the same kind of terror-brigades used to enjoy in the days of Monem Khan.

The breakdown of law and order is thus directly related to the patronisation of extra-legal activities by the ruling group and subordination of the law and order

authority to the whims of the new political and economic Moghuls. (It will not be correct to say that all the incidents of daylight robberies, killings, hold-ups, kidnappings can be traced to the ruling group. But it can be said with certainty that most of these incidents which take place under the very nose of the police and the administration are the doings of groups or individuals enjoying protection from powerful political quarters. This is evident from the helplessness of the police authorities in apprehending the culprits. The Gopibagh incident, the daylight murder before the Jonaki Cinema hall in March last, the aftermath of police interference with the occupants of a white jeep in which several policemen were threatened with the loss of their jobs, the embarrassment of the police patrol after they had their catch of the night and found their jobs at jeopardy the next morning, have singularly contributed to the breakdown of law and order in the country).

Such a situation has led to police brutalities on the one hand and mob-killings on the other. When the police and the people know for certain that the miscreants are the flower-children of the Establishment and the law cannot touch them, the obvious reaction will be for the police to beat the hell out of the suspects before a telephone call from powerful quarters obtains their unconditional release, whatever the crime. The mob fury culminating in an orgy of killing of alleged suspects is due to the popular belief that the arms of the law cannot reach these elements on account of political interference. It is also speculated that the law and order authorities often leave such elements in the hands of mob because of their impotence to apply the rule of law.

Rule of Mujib: This is the 'rule of Mujib' which the nephew of the Prime Minister envisages for Bangladesh. In a write up in his affluent newspaper, he had once categorically pleaded for what he described as the 'rule of Mujib', and headlined his signed article with the title, 'We Want the Rule of Mujib and Not the Rule of Law'

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The essence of the 'rule of Mujib', which the Prime Minister's nephew wants the people to suffer, clearly advocates the rule of violence by a handful few having total immunity from law or punitive actions. But the dynamics of violence have their own dialectics. The antithesis of counter-violence, and even institutional resistance to semi-official violence by a section of the ruling group, grows out of necessity. And the country today is caught in this vicious interaction.

Similarly, such official violence produces its own grave-diggers from among its own ranks. (Several killings, including the Lalbagh killing of Fahim last month, are the outcome of intra-group conflict and clash of interests. The people of Lalbagh reportedly rejoiced at the death of Fahim at the hands of his colleagues because the deceased had let loose a reign of terror in the area under the benign patronage of the ruling group. And Fahim, as is known to all, enjoyed the loving protection from the highest of all quarters like the now forgotten Passepartou and Khoka had enjoyed during the Monem days. The institutional resistance to such unprincipled violence by a section of the ruling group is also growing. The new City SP of Dhaka, who is an earnest young man with lots of ideas, has already become an embarrassment to the ruling group because of his determined bid to root out these evils.) And the grave-diggers are increasing in large numbers notwithstanding the power and 'political potency of their overlords.'

Examples of this can be cited in scores to prove the point and there is a danger involved in doing so. But who cares for the killer's bullet or dagger when the nation is a victim to these parasitical bands of political pirates?

Against this backdrop, the Prime Minister's righteous indignation over political killings and breakdown of law and order sounds ridiculous. When he cannot answer the pleadings of the family of Nur Hussain, who was cut down by the bullets of known assailants in broad daylight, he should not put others on the dock for the loss of Nur Hussain and hundreds and thousands like him who are being eliminated by the terror brigades of the ruling party.

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The comrades are back !

It is a long trek since the first of January 1972 when two anti-US demonstrators were gunned down by the policemen of the Awami League government. As popular indignation swept the country, cries rang out 'down with the puppet regime of US imperialism'. The thugs of the ruling party throttled the ringing slogan in one fell swoop. The cause of Vietnam stood betrayed as much as the cause of the people of Bangladesh. The ritual of anti-imperialism by the NAP(M), CPB, and their student and labour wings, was over soon enough. The memorial of the young martyrs in front of the USIS was demolished; the NAP(M) office bore marks of arson and ransacking for days like an abandoned haunt in a ghost story. A badly mauled Professor Muzaffar quietly licked his wounds, and the guardian angels in the CPB went about handing out their ministrations to the prodigals in the NAP(M) and the BCU (Bangladesh Chhatra Union).

In one single stroke, the scenario of open hostility changed into loyal subservience like before. Sometime later, an apologetic Comrade Moni Singh was searching for a torchlight in the twilight zone of the Ganabhaban to see for himself how tall has grown the 'friendship tree' in the garden of Eden.

Only four months later, Professor Muzaffar and Comrade Moni Singh with their retinue of 'cultured' students of both sexes, and the absentee trade union leaders, were seen in strange company on a raised podium at the Baitul Mukarram. Thanks to Marxism, Tailism and Muzaffar Ahmed's thoughts, the congerie of patriots, as they call themselves, was seen rubbing

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shoulders with Sheikh Moni and Abdul Mannan, Zillur Rahman and Abdur Razzaq in a warming-up parade before pouncing on the unwary congregation at the NAP(B) meeting and beating the hell out of the 'Chinese agents'.

The spectacle was unique. The lathi-wielding attackers, backed securely by jeeploads of lethal weapons and professional hit-men, formed the vanguard in the battle of muscles and was led amongst other by Mujahidul Islam Selim of the BCU and Pankaj Bhattacharya of the NAP(M). The galaxy was, however, incomplete since Comrade Moni Singh and Professor Muzaffar preferred to stay back for rear-guard action.

In this backdrop, the award of the medallion of peace to the Prime Minister is surely gratifying, if not for the nation, for the God of polity. He has certainly earned it on the blood and bones of the three million dead, the two casualties of the first of January, and of Nur Hussain, who was mowed down by some well-known killers belonging to the ruling party. But who cares since honour is singular and death is common! Meanwhile, the economic and political crises can be swept under the carpet until such time as another carnival of misplaced heroism is staged in Dhaka.

The desperation of the ruling group in Bangladesh is evidently clear in the newly emerging line-up in national politics at the behest of international powers. The ten-party reunion of the AL, NAP(M), CPB and their variants to contain the popular struggle led by the left-democratic forces underlines the pattern of politics which will rule the country in coming days. It is a strange and yet an inevitable ganging-up of the desperadoes in the Indo-Soviet axis to hold Bangladesh to ransom to expansionist and strategic designs. A weak and helpless Sheikh is their best

bet. The more he is caught in the mire of his own misrule, the merrier will be the cacophony of praise for his heroism. After all Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, or for that matter, whatever is left of his icon, can still pool higher biddings in the sweepstakes of Bangladesh politics. If it does not work, only then the loyal heir shall be put on the saddle. Meanwhile Mr. Tajuddin's gimmicks of rebellion can wait, and we shall for the time being see or hear little of the bitter power struggle inside the ruling party or the cabinet.

Hence for sometime at least, the nation may witness a renewed spate of vigorous activities on the part of our good friends whose disgust with the erratic Bangladesh leadership was at times quite pronounced. (The Russians, however, consistently kept a cool composure despite the setbacks they had suffered during Ambassador Popov's tenure. They continued to woo the leadership painstakingly for ensnaring Bangladesh into the Brezhnev Pact). The redoubtable Mr. D.P. Dhar's August visit to Bangladesh to relieve the planners of the burden of planning, and to establish the eternal complementarity of the two economies, could not have been missed.

He came and went, along with a bevy of planning commission functionaries including Dr. S Chakravarty, to bail the Bangladesh leadership out of the economic quagmire. The Planning Commission and its Ford Foundation-funded socialist members got the hint. Bangladesh got a generous credit of taka 56 crores and an extra benefit of expertise in different sectors. And they will be doing it as a token of friendly gesture notwithstanding their own problems and handicaps. It seemed that after giving out the joint declaration in a press conference, where our Deputy Chairman Dr. Nurul Islam acted pretty dumb, Mr. D.P. Dhar was satisfied with what he designated as 'higher stage of cooperation'

It seemed that after giving out the joint declaration in a press conference, where our Deputy Chairman Dr. Nurul Islam acted pretty dumb, Mr. D.P. Dhar was satisfied with what he designated as 'higher stage of cooperation'.

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The competition to save Bangladesh and its leadership is not confined to our bosom friends- namely, India and the Soviet Union. The Americans too are in the race. After releasing the PL-480 fund, they have reportedly agreed to give 80 million dollars in aid for the current year. So far, their inordinately high share of contribution in the form of relief and grant has not yielded the necessary political dividends. The Russians are mostly busy giving us trawlers and naval craft, and recently some MIGs for the air force. They seem more intent upon the kind of assistance which has strategic or military implication.

Thus a new stage has been set for the enactment of an interesting drama in Bangladesh. The people are mere spectators. There will be demonstrations and riots, starvation and death. But the drama will go on. It will be like a puppet show in which no one knows who pulls the string, not even our peaceable, 'fatherly' and 'kind-hearted' national hero named Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Holiday is our enemy paper— New Soviet offensive

Last year in the month of April, the Novosti Press Agency (APN) had released a feature in the Bangladesh press under the byline of one Mr. Victorov in contravention of the law of decorum and international practices. The Soviet news agency in that article openly advocated the suppression of some newspapers in Bangladesh, namely the Ganasakti, the Haq Katha and the Holiday, and made bland insinuations against some well-known Marxist leaders and intellectuals. The feature, which was a strange and laborious commentary on Maoist activities in Bangladesh, went to vicious lengths to indict the sponsors of the Communist Unity Centre, Mohammad Toaha and Deben Sikdar, and equate them with the extreme right with the ostensible purpose of influencing public opinion in Bangladesh and pressurising the Bangladesh government to take repressive measures against these political parties, groups and newspapers.

Eleven months later, the Soviets have once again bared their fangs after staging the mock heroics of the peace carnival. Holiday's exposure of the mala fide aspects of the Peace Conference (Holiday, May 27) seems to have spoiled their broth of collective security by turning Bangladesh into a strategic bastion against China and thereby drawing us into the vortex of Sino-Soviet antagonism.

The ire of the peace merchants exploded into open hostility in the press conference addressed by the leader of the Soviet delegation early this week. The platitudes of peace and friendship suddenly assumed an ugly overtone when a Soviet diplomat intercepted a questioner from the national press to the utter surprise and indignation of the

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guest correspondents. The questioner was readily admonished by the interceptor not to phrase his queries on the basis 'of the reports of Holiday' which he said 'is our enemy paper'. The press conference broke up after such an outrageous comment by a foreign diplomat.

The reporters came back to the Press Club and convened the meeting of the Standing Committee. The meeting expressed its indignation over the incident and deemed it an interference in our internal affairs. The Standing Committee decided not to cover the press conference excepting an agreed report of four lines and the photo-journalists also decided against the coverage of the press conference.

Meanwhile, backroom manoeuvrings by some enthusiasts in the press circle were going on to save the situation. Pressures were brought to bear upon the reporters from various quarters to go back on their decision. When they stubbornly refused, an impromptu report was creeded by the Bangladesh Press International which appeared the next morning in a section of the press. The violation of the Standing Committee's decision and the threat of victimisation of some reporters caused widespread indignation among the correspondents of the national press.

The Standing Committee once again met on Thursday at the Press Club and unanimously condemned the BPI for releasing the news-story in violation of the decision of the committee, and also the newspapers which published the story on the news conference despite the mandate from the Committee. The Standing Committee further adopted a resolution condemning the demeanour of the Soviet diplomat and forwarded it to the Dhaka Union of Journalists for onward transmission to the Foreign Ministry of Bangladesh. The Dhaka Union of Journalists will be handing over the protest-resolution to the relevant ministry for appropriate action.

The moral of the above is clear. The Soviet diplomatic apparat and its front organisations are desperately out to establish Soviet hegemony in

Bangladesh. In order to achieve their objective, they will even dispense with the niceties of diplomatic practices and codes of conduct. The naivete of the Bangladesh government has encouraged them to have a field-day on the soil of this independent country. In the process, the government has compromised our sovereignty, conceptually to say the least, not once but several times. The Victorov feature of April 1972, the CPI Secretary Rajeswar Rao's open suggestions to repress the left around the same time and the constant scheming of their proteges in Bangladesh, namely, the CPB and the Muzaffar NAP, to eliminate the left democratic forces whom they describe as 'unpatriotic', are all parts of the same plan. The plan is to make us a Soviet satellite with Indian help for countering their sworn enemy, China.

The Soviet strategy in South Asia is clearly to replace US imperialism which is on the retreat following the successes of the wars of liberation in various parts, particularly Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. While they are collaborating to the hilt with US imperialism in Western Europe and in Cambodia where the Lon Nol regime is tottering in the face of the onward march of the national liberation army led by the Communists, their vitriolics against US imperialism are only to substitute the latter and that too on the basis of non-antagonistic contradictions. The Soviet betrayal of the Cambodian liberation struggle unmistakably brings forth its sham support to national liberation struggles in colonies and neo-colonies, and the global designs of Soviet social imperialism.

To revert, the brashness of the Soviet offensive in Bangladesh and their open interference with the domestic political process may soon turn Bangladesh into a hot-bed of international intrigues. The Bangladesh government must stop this nonsense if not for any other reason than for this all-important reason that licentious activities of any foreign power will open the door for the same kind of operations organised by other powers, particularly the US. After all, sovereignty is something to be preserved and not squandered away like relief materials.

The Soviet offensive in Bangladesh and their open interference with the domestic political process may soon turn Bangladesh into a hot-bed of international intrigues.

A budget of conjectures

The
passingly
brief
appraisal of
the revised
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when judged
in the
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Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed's apologia for the civil budget in his prepared text delivered before the Parliament and also in the briefing meeting with the 'national press' was good rhetoric but poor arithmetic. He presented us with a surplus revenue budget wrapped up in new taxes, and also a king-size development budget with all the optimism that he has been able to muster himself. But the credibility lag seems to have blurred the array of impressive figures into uninspiring nothingness notwithstanding a careful plugging of the holes of a punctured economy.

The fact is that the budget so presented by the managers of the country's finance, without an economic survey of the past year's performance, gave rise to many questions, often cynical ones. The passingly brief appraisal of the revised budget of 1972-73, when judged in the context of the Finance Minister's own observations on the state of the economy, read somewhat sham. As a result the projection of revenue and other receipts, and also the source of financing a fairly massive development programme, appeared to be rather tentative, if not highly speculative.

The economic survey being a necessary document that goes with budget proposals, provides a realistic perspective of the failures and successes of economic management, and thereby helps the process of rectification of subjective and objective shortcomings. The subjective aspect deals with what the government proclaims as 'socialism'. The objective part relates to the various policy pursuits towards that end.

The people, however, has a right to know its performance and evaluate the conduct of the economic management on the basis of its past performance. But

that is not to be so, since the leaders of our government are not only 'angelic' in their patriotic pursuits but also in their economic wisdom. They would rather not share such exclusive wisdom with the people.

Cynicism aside, the budget of Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed can even turn out to be a castle in the air in the absence of tangible receipts under the heads of revenue, capital and foreign loan, aid and grant.

This leaves the government to finance its own administrative and other unavoidable expenditures through extensive deficit financing by way of printing paper currency. They have ostensibly been doing that in the past year, although they would not like to admit the same. The development programme of 525-35 crore takas likewise, is highly tentative for want of definite commitments from sources which the Finance Minister has preferred not to define. Excepting the commitment from Yugoslavia, no indication has been given as to how and from whom the government proposes to obtain 352 crore taka, and at what price.

The issue of foreign loan and grant immediately calls for a scrutiny of the government's profession with regard to socialist transformation, and such other much-abused abstractions. The Quixotic sabre-rattling of the government functionaries against the windmill of imperialist aid, and the loud proclamations of self-reliance appear rather comical, if not thoroughly dishonest, in the context of the development plan for 1973-74. The foreign aid dependence to the extent of over sixty per cent is surely not compatible with the concept of social transformation and, to quote from the budget speech, 'to prepare the ground for progress towards socialism.' Such absurdity is only conceivable by the Awami League economists, who have been seemingly at pains for the past few months to deliver the goose of planning that lays the golden egg. God help us, if the Annual Development Plan for 1973-74 is 'an exposition of the first step towards socialism'. We should give it a rest for decency's sake.

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The taxation proposals too do not at all speak of the social consciousness of the Awami League government. After plundering the economy like nobody's business, the socialist government has decided to pass on the burden to the poor people and the consumers. And this they have done without even the minimal effort to stabilise the prices. Resultantly, a chain reaction has already set in affecting the whole range of goods, proposed to be taxed or not. The rationale for taxation is also highly amusing. It has been stated that since the consumers are already paying dearly for certain commodities on account of middlemen and other profiteers (pray who are they?), the government could as well take its share from the consumer's pocket.

The Finance Minister, however, deserves credit for owning up the 'government's mistakes' in the press briefing where he also took the opportunity to ask for the cooperation of everyone concerned for stemming the inevitable rot. But if we may humbly say to the government—cooperation can only be obtained by those who can honestly and boldly face facts rather than sweep them under the rugs, set personal examples rather than look for scapegoats, and do one's duty first without interfering with others' affairs. These are the virtues which the ruling Awami League has hardly known, and will possibly never learn to inculcate.

HOLIDAY

Will resist all pressures

I have once again been targetted by the redoubtable Home Minister, Mr. Abdul Malek Ukil, in company with Mr. Abdul Quddus Makhan, M.P., on the floor of the Jatiyo Sangsad on Tuesday last. They unleashed a most unbelievable tirade against me and Holiday on the plea that the Executive Editor of Holiday, Mr. M. Aslam, has opted to stay in Pakistan and crossed over to that country from London. The plea gave Mr. Ukil a Godsend opportunity to wriggle out of a most untenable situation arising out of his vile outbursts against the journalist community and me on September 19 last.

I consider the recurrence of such indecorous vilification on the floor of the House as a conspiracy to throttle Holiday and crush me. Such an effort has been afoot since independence when the outspoken role of Holiday started shaking up the Establishment which is dominated by the corrupt section of our nouveau-bourgeoisie and the expropriators of properties and privileges. This section has been active to bring about the rule of fascism in Bangladesh by using the charisma of the Prime Minister as a screen.

May I take this opportunity to state here that Mr. M. Aslam was our colleague in Holiday, and whatever he is reported to have done is his own action. He left Bangladesh on a valid passport in the month of April of his own and on leave. Since then I have had no track of him. In a letter written on the 10th of September from London, he said: "Not having received a single line from you despite all the letters I wrote to you-including the last desperate one- I cannot but help feel that my functions as Executive Editor ought now to be

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Mr. M. Aslam was not only working for Holiday, he was also a news commentator of Bangladesh Betar (Radio), and I believe, he was allowed to do so after proper scrutiny.

terminated... My return as Executive Editor might in fact be rather superfluous, much as I would have liked to revive my passionate affair with Holiday again... What I, therefore, propose is this: subject to your concurrence, I shall formally resign as Executive Editor." On receipt of this, the Holiday management decided to retain his position until the formal resignation letter arrived.

Mr. M. Aslam was not only working for Holiday, he was also a news commentator of Bangladesh Betar (Radio), and I believe, he was allowed to do so after proper scrutiny. He was also given a passport with proper clearance. His reported arrival in Pakistan for settling down there is his own decision. We have not yet been able to ascertain whether he has actually gone there or not. Even if it is true, it is similar to many other such cases like that of S.M. Ozair of the BSS and Akhtar Payami of Morning News. I fail to understand how I am responsible for his decision.

If the stalwarts in the ruling party could keep quiet when many others left for Pakistan, including the family of Mr. Mahmud Ali, the Pakistani Minister, then why create such a row now? The reason is very simple. Since the sectional interest group in the ruling party could not make me and Holiday bend to their pressures and threats, and since they, despite crude attempts, failed to catch me and Holiday on the wrong foot, they are now desperate to find a plea for their vendetta.

I wonder how the Home Minister, Mr. Ukil, has allowed me to be outside the jail, notwithstanding his discovery of a successful alien agent in me. His desperation and that of his masters' and colleagues to pin me down only prove my point and our crusades in Holiday. The Home Minister has not only indulged in character-assassination, he has also been uncivil in his statements.

It is beneath my dignity to protest against such outbursts. But may I repeat that my financial state of affairs and that of my associates in Holiday are much

above his station, and the government machinery is welcome to scrutinise the affairs of mine and Holiday. But Mr. Ukil knows that not everyone in the administration would be as lowly as he or Mr. Makhan is. Even within the ruling party there are civilised and sane people, not to speak of the government.

The insolence of the MP from Brahmanbaria is limitless. He accused me of collaborating with the Pakistani military junta and supplying them with foodstuffs. What a preposterous lie! These useless escapees who spent their time in Calcutta and never went near the battlefield do not even know that I was arrested, tortured, along with my wife, kept under surveillance and hunted by the fanatical Al-Badar. Holiday was banned along with the People and the Forum, and its accounts confiscated. But I don't consider these as my defence since I don't believe that martyrdom is a political argument. I categorically maintain my position regarding the divisive role of the Mujibnagar escapees and their mad rush for the spoils of power and privileges. I take my hat off to the freedom-fighters who staked their lives for the cause of our motherland and they include our brothers and kin, the youth, the Bengalee army officers and jawans, the police and also committed civilians. Holiday has always stood by their cause and will always do so.

Finally, I appeal to Prime Minister to put a stop to such nonsense and abuse of parliamentary traditions. I do responsible journalism and I have a very large audience. I shall always stick to my faith and commitment even if it means death or being framed.

Let us all wear the red badge of courage and save our motherland.

Mr. Ukil knows that not everyone in the administration would be as lowly as he or Mr. Makhan is. Even within the ruling party there are civilised and sane people, not to speak of the government.

Abu Sayeed Choudhury Episode: A casualty of crisis

No one thought that the presidency, which is an elective position, could be bartered for an office of profit only to be held at the pleasure of the government.

The purported resignation of Mr. Abu Sayeed Choudhury from the vaunted presidency of Bangladesh, and his simultaneous switching of roles from Head of State to that of a glorified globe-trotter, left the people wondering. No one thought that the presidency, which is an elective position, could be bartered for an office of profit only to be held at the pleasure of the government. However incredible this may sound, the first-ever constitutionally elected President of Bangladesh has opted to resign in favour of a diplomatic assignment carrying the 'rank, status and remuneration of a cabinet minister'. This came as a shocker more than the so-called resignation. People now ask: Is supra-political presidency, which takes precedence over all other persons and offices in the state, a transferrable job?

The question, though pertinent, can wait for the moment. What is relevant here is the political implication of such an event which has been masterfully played across the gallery by the political government, on the one hand, and ignominiously conceded to by the presidency, on the other. The former, in its successful accomplishment, has grossly undermined whatever is left of the niceties of bourgeois constitutionalism, and the latter, in his ungallant abnegation, has done the rest without even a feeble protestation.

Mr. Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, the former President of Bangladesh, has thus allowed the Presidency to be trifled with by getting a transfer to another cushy job that carries no portfolio. He has neither resigned for reasons both spoken and unspoken, nor has he been dismissed by an authoritarian chief executive for his

defense of Presidential prerogatives. But as it is, he has been merely led away, as if, from one playhouse to another, like an obedient ward by a strong-willed chaperon, one who would stand no nonsense in the way of his own dispensation of executive power. In the process, the last of the holds that barred the doors to one-man rule has been removed with Mr. Choudhury doing the job himself. He did it with as much trepidation as he was wont in his occupancy of the Bangabhaban—the seat of the President.

No doubt, the excellent news-management, and the photographs capturing the expansive smiles of a farewell-meet, reflected the mood of a happy parting. No doubt, the letters exchanged in veneration of each other between the former President and the Prime Minister were the ideal models of farewell missives. The words were, as if, etched in gold in order not to betray the slightest misgiving on the part of either.

Nevertheless, the entire proceedings, beginning with the so-called resignation and the subsequent ceremonies down to the offerings at the shrine of the Ganabhaban, looked a trifle pathetic for an ex-President to bear. Yet he bore it well with smiles though, call it diffidence or sheer force of habit. The cynical mortals like us, who were looking for a martyr in the person of the ex-President, were shocked at this anti-climax. But could it have been otherwise? The fact is louder than before that the will of a single individual is the key to governance, or the lack of it, in Bangladesh. Even the President is dispensable.

Ceremonial and material: If the crime of the ex-President lies in his rendering the Presidency a surrogate to the executive in matters where it has precedence, the crime of the latter lies in its violation of the dictates of the Constitution. In fact, the equation between the presidency and the executive has all along been uneasy, not on the question of material power, but ironically on issues of formality. That such mere

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formalities which mean nothing in the actual dispensation of authority were ignored at will by the executive is not to be taken as sheer omission. There is an element of commission in such encroachments in so far as public projection is concerned. Thus, granting of amnesty which is a presidential prerogative curiously bore the name of the Prime Minister.

110. In a situation where the image of the Prime Minister is larger than his office, the observance of constitutional formalities does not materially alter the relative powers conferred on the presidency and the executive by the constitution itself. And more so, when the question of usurpation of powers by the presidency does not arise at all under the Constitution of Bangladesh. In actuality, it has happened the other way round despite the fact that the presidential prerogatives are mostly ceremonial and not material.

If a jurist like Mr. Abu Sayeed Chowdhury felt no compunction in assenting to bad laws or even promulgating ordinances PO 8, 9 and 50, among others, at the behest of the executive, he could as well be given the compensatory benefit of initiating such benign acts as the amnesty, in exercise of the powers conferred on the presidency under article 49 of the constitution. But that was not to be. The murmurs over the Eid-day pardon, announced in the name of the Prime Minister, notwithstanding, the President was once again bypassed on the occasion of granting the general amnesty. Wasn't it much too much neglect to bear?

It is difficult to understand the aberrations of the political government over such trifles when (a) the presidency in company with other forces is not in a position to scuttle the popularly elected government as it did in Pakistan days, and (b) when the Prime Minister has ensured that emergency powers given by the Parliament through a Constitutional amendment are not exercised by the President alone. The invocation of

emergency powers requires the counter signature of the Prime Minister as well.

Personality cult: Then there must be other compulsions including the eternal human folly of foisting a cult of personality over the nation and the government. For all practical purposes, it now seems that over the last two years of our existence on foreign doles and in an atmosphere of licentious governance, the spectre of one-party state has gradually boiled down to the reality of one-man rule. The subordination of the party to individual charisma began early enough, touching off fissiparous tendencies within the ruling party. The manifestations are clear: The AL council has been put off twice, and as the crisis deepens the nation may witness a lot of fireworks in the AL congregation in late January, unless it is shifted again.

On the other hand, the Prime Minister is gradually leaning away from his own party in his pursuit of eternal glory and also away from the constitution.

Such a psychology can only lead to paranoia. In such a state of mind, one is likely to see conspirators all around, including in one's own household, and is likely to act in the most absurd manner over inconsequential gossip and simple hearsay, and quite a few heads have already rolled. Such tendencies again become stronger when the enormity of the problems and the mounting discontent present a grim challenge to contend with. And the challenge today is total.

Seen in this perspective, the Abu Sayeed Chowdhury episode is a mere indicator of the moral and political crises in the government. He is as much a victim of the cultist proclivities of the chief executive as he is the first major casualty of the crises. And this is only the beginning. We may witness many more, including the rebellion of some senior ministers like Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed and General M.A.G. Usmany. Unlike Mr. Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, they may not choose to be so naive as to throw away their moral advantage.

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The masterly handling of the presidential episode by the political government is the other indicator of how they attempt to whitewash an unpleasant episode. But will it suffice?

Abysmal void: The fact of the matter, however, is that two years of misadventure with the nation's administration, economy and foreign policy has landed the government in a difficult situation. When they look back, the past points at them with an accusing finger. Looking ahead, they are finding themselves at the farthest end of a precipice with an abysmal void staring at their face. They have ruined jute, destroyed tea, debilitated the administration, encouraged establishment violence and invited the superpowers to have a field day on the soil of Bangladesh. The snowball effect of all these are enough to scare the daylight out of even the most committed sharers of ministerial powers. Possibly the harshest critics of the government and the Sheikh are his own people, including his ministers. The phase of desertion has begun.

To go back to the question of presidency, it is possible that the Speaker may continue to act as the President for some more time and an immediate election may not be held in the coming winter session. The political configuration within the establishment and at the top may undergo further metamorphosis in the coming months. Some suspect that the Constitution may even be further amended to turn it into a presidential form.

It will, however, be interesting to see how the Prime Minister contends with the crises in government. He is apparently at his tether's end. Meanwhile, the former President will nurse his wounds in private in the villa of Geneva, and reconstruct Bangladesh in the wide sphere of the open world. But his tragedy remains: he could neither become a martyr nor an object of sympathy. He leaves the president's house ingloriously for the sheer lack of what in English is known as courage.

New year's eve changes: An administrative facelift

The latest administrative changes in the government of Bangladesh have apparently caused more stir than such routine substitutions should otherwise warrant. This has been primarily because of the presence of an element of surprise in the change itself, and the popular estimation of the crisis in government. Observers, therefore, expect a further shuffle in the top echelons of the administrative hierarchy: and as such, these changes can be deemed to be indicative of a deep concern of the political government in respect of its quality of personnel-management in key and sensitive positions.

Career-jobs in the higher strata under a political government almost always carry a certain aura of sanction and preference. Besides, there is also an added element of political consideration in respect of the select jobs which are proximate to the powers-that-be. These preferences and considerations are often rationalised in the name of ideology and for the sake of loyalty. But with changing circumstances, the preferences also change and so does the pattern of job-allocation.

Since independence, the Bangladesh administration, inclusive of the elite and the non-elite, has been in a state of flux. It went through at least three different phases beginning with the 'coup d'etat' by a section of Mujibnagar elite, incursion of political partisan appointees, and finally a relative maintenance of the status quo through a balancing of the different contending forces in the state apparatus in an uneasy

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truce. But in all these phases, the administration could hardly settle down and be its own as a functional body in relation to the political government, and also in terms of the fulfilment of its due obligations. The result has been total immobility and confusion which has been further confounded by the machinations of the extra-administrative political caucus.

However, in each of these phases, different sets of people claimed ascendancy to the detriment of the administrative compact which came to be kicked about politically for both its omissions and commissions. The different sets basked in the reflected glory of political leadership and the glow of martyrdom at different times. Meanwhile, the mass of the administrative personnel of all descriptions and categories marked their time in a vacuum, with multiple authorities bullying them, and the sword of PO 9 hanging over their heads.

Initially it was an administration divided, like the nation was, by the simple measure of 'collaboration.' The new patriotic elite from Mujibnagar pushed out hundreds from the Secretariat in a bid to cleanse the administration of the vestiges of the Pakistani legacy. It was a period of ignominy, and an instance of jobbery at its height. And all these were carried out ironically in the name of 'revolution'.

The tide turned with the passage of time. But the damage that was done to the administration could not be repaired. The second phase marked the ascendancy of a select group of people whose lack of patriotism by the Mujibnagar yardstick was quashed by the fact of their individual loyalty.

Members of the famous 303 were picked at random without a formal and total clearance of the rest from the stigma of a screening effected by Yahya's administration on his assumption of power from Ayub Khan in then Pakistan. The measure of partial absorption of the members of the 303 was another

unkind cut for those who could not claim political liaison with the leadership like the 'fortunate' compatriots in the list, and therefore remained suspect in public estimation.

In between these two categories there sprung up a new genre of favoured appointees who act more as holiday-makers than public servants. These jobs are their trophies for whatever victories they are supposed to have won within and without the country during the struggle for independence. Their daily chores, therefore, comprise more of visits to the Ganabhaban than attendance at their respective offices. They are the pensioners of independence, and until sometime back (thanks to the Prime Minister), were the regular fixtures of his august house.

The description of the above three categories has been given only to paint a picture of what our administration looks like; and it is dismal indeed. Gresham's law seems to have worked here so well that the bad ones have driven the good ones out of circulation. And with all these contending forces trying to carve out a permanent place in the sun (and now the craze is an assignment abroad), the mere underdogs in the administration have been attempting to keep their heads above water by indulging in inter-services rivalry. The animus between the services (the Service Reorganisation Committee report is yet to be made public) is so sharp these days that the prospects of a corporate administration functioning as a coherent whole are bleak enough.

The net result has been confusion, inaction, lack of decision-making and, of course, a lurking fear. Despite these factors, whatever little dynamism was achieved in the field of administration was cancelled out by impetuous executive actions like summary suspensions or dismissals of public servants without recourse to penal procedures. These could only result in the undermining of the morals of the administrative machine.

Their daily chores, therefore, comprise more of visits to the Ganabhaban than attendance at their respective offices.

The people who have become the casualties of this change may not be all that bad or useless.

The recent changes, however, do not suffer from tentativeness or impetuosity. By the sheer look of it, the change speaks of cool deliberation about the placement of functionaries in key positions and of a trend of wholesale changes in the top echelons of the administration. The Prime Minister must have been well-advised in this administrative shuffle. His administration badly needs a facelift. The people who have become the casualties of this change may not be all that bad or useless. They were as much the victims of their omissions as they are of the sick state of the administrative machine. The malaise was again political and not functional. The attempt at giving a new look to the administration should also be coupled with a realisation on the part of our political leadership that it also needs a facelift.

AL Council session: Honesty must begin at home

Preceded by token violation of Section 144 by the JSD and a predictable tension that blissfully lasted no longer than the foul smoke of the tear-gas shells, the majestic Council of the ruling Awami League opened amidst the usual grandiloquence of the government-party leaders. The listeners in their tribal attire of 'Mujib-coats' received the sermons. So did the nation which by now has hopefully known the truth of the dictum: 'Words are wise men's counters; they are coins only to the fools.'

If the speeches, both spoken and written, sounded like replays of worn-out cliches of fire and brimstone, the substance or the lack of it, could not be missed. The nation has been getting it always on the rebound with a monotonous regularity without even having to lend their ears to the stock-phrases of more threats and less persuasion.

For all practical purposes, the declamations at one or other such pompous congregations of the AL Council have been reduced to theatrical soliloquies of the Prince of Denmark. Similarly, the weight of emotion, however, only seems a little out of proportion to the sense of guilt that Macbeth suffered. And here lies the tragedy of our new Mandarins whose brash self-righteousness outweighs their scruples in owning up their individual or collective malfeasance. The Awami League Council is no exception to this rule of self-acquittal at the expense of the people or, shall we say, of the nation and the country.

The Prime Minister's speech at the inaugural session is thus no departure from his semantic best or his semantic worst. The only distinctive feature that

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marked it out from the earlier ones was his own conflict with himself. However, the little penance was offset by his egocentric reaction to JSD's gamble with Section 144 on Friday last. The dignity of his speech suffered in the process, to the discernible embarrassment of the fraternal delegates, amidst an uproar of applause from a faceless crowd of councillors.

There have been two very persistent tenors in the speeches of the Awami League President for some time past. The first related to the democratic dispensation of his one-party government and the second to alleged secret killings of Awami League leaders and MPs, for which he openly held the Opposition responsible.

On the first point, his defense often suffers from duplicity of what he describes as the compulsions of a 'post-revolutionary' situation and the generosity of his expansive soul in putting up with the 'unpatriotic' elements barring the components of the Awami-League sponsored infamous 'Gano Oikyo Jote'. The message is now louder than ever than any individual, group or organisation, whether overground or underground, which does not conform to the so-called ideals of the stage bedfellows in the GOJ, are destined to be treated in a way other than democratic, and hence are doomed to suffer the heavy hand of a coercive state and party machine. So the nation stands divided between the 'patriotic' ones and the 'unpatriotic' ones as it did between the 65 million 'collaborators' (on the basis of 1971 population figures) and the 'Mujibnagar refugees' on the morrow of independence.

Even after the wooing of the 'collaborators' by a divine act of pardon, the patriotic ranks are dwindling fast. But that does not worry them because they are now the masters of the state machine and the nation is at their mercy.

Such distortions of democracy can only result from a delusion of power born out of deification of one's mortal self. Completely charmed by this transitory illusion

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of being a demigod, the Prime Minister has unfortunately subordinated his commitments to the people as the leader of the nation to the selfish ends of a most corrupt and self-seeking syndicate. The GOJ, which supersedes even the patriotic section of the Awami Leaguers and the Awami League as a party, is the latest amalgam of such elements.

Not that the Prime Minister does not know of it. Or even after knowing it, he keeps his eyes shut to the reality of corruption by consent. His weakness (which others call kindness) for such elements have now turned into a compulsion for bearing with them. The dominant section of the power elite, which comprise the corrupt section of the new 'bourgeoisie' and comprador elements serving Marwari capital, are now in the process of consolidation of their power in the various strata of the government. A ruling class of expropriators of properties and privileges has now become an integral part of this band of autonomous predators. Now that they are stronger than before, mere entreaties will hardly change their heart. Despite what the Prime Minister had to tell them in the course of his speech, it is only once in several centuries that a thug transforms himself into a Valmiki—a robber into an epic poet.

The second point of secret killings, on which the Prime Minister has been talking for some time and for which he holds the opposition responsible, is also another instance of witch-hunting. Secret killings are of course taking place. But the responsibility of the ruling party in this respect is much more than that of the opposition's. It is also comical that certain killings of Awami League leaders including those of Abdul Ghafoor of Khulna, Ahmed Faruque of Pabna, Sawgatul Alam of Barisal, Ratan Chowdhury and Motaharuddin Ahmed of Bhola which are known to be the result of murderous infighting within the Awami League over spoils and power, have been conveniently blamed on political extremists. It can be said with certainty that ninety per

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cent of the Awami Leaguers, listed as the victims of secret political killings, have lost their lives in intra-party feuds, rather than at the hands of opposition elements.

Against the impressive list of the Awami Leaguers, an enumeration of the victims of establishment-violence will be shockingly high. But then in the estimation of our power elite, they are the 'unpatriotic scoundrels' who need to be eliminated in the interest of the nation.

It is understandable that the Prime Minister, as the chief of the ruling party and the sole executor of power in Bangladesh, will rationalise the failures of his government and the party. But stretching this rationalisation too far can only strain the limits of credence. His government and his party in collaboration with the Soviet-financed politicians have progressively blocked all avenues of constitutional opposition. The constitutional political parties like the NAP(B) and the JSD are finding it difficult to operate within the bounds of constitutionalism. The opposition cadres are being taken care of in the most ruthless manner by the Rakkhi Bahini and the police. As in the occupation period, they are being picked up indiscriminately and are disappearing the next day. Some corpses at some place suddenly turn up. People suspect that these are the remains of the unfortunate ones who dared oppose an authoritarian government. The balance-sheet of violence and killing tilts heavily against the government and the ruling party.

Judged in this perspective, the speeches of the Prime Minister seem irrational indeed. Such irrationality is the product of the illusion of power and delusion of grandeur. The pompous Council, in habitual encore, talks of elimination of corruption amid shouts of blue murder. These are coins only the fools. Like charity, honesty must begin at home. And home in this case is the Awami League and the government.

Super-diplomat for non-function

One Ambassador too many from a single country can never be the host country's protocol office's delight. Yet the Swiss have chosen to bear with it for goodness's sake— or so it appears. It would possibly have been less perplexing for them to host an exile or a prince in distress. But then that is their predicament, and not ours; and here lies the novelty, if not the artistry of banishment.

If the respectability of a titular presidency is a trifle underpaid than is usual in an era of inflation, the price for riddance seems inordinately high in relation to a deflated foreign exchange reserve. A thousand bucks in pound sterling per mensem and an exotic villa in Geneva, sans the sumptuary for diplomatic non-function, are as good as an overpaid holiday on the French Riviera. It surely makes a dilettante of a former President happy, but it does add to the taxpayer's interminable nightmare.

It is once again the Parliament's privilege to beg this question of the government since they had to elect a new president in Mr. Mohamadullah. The attributes of a special envoy in the person of an elbowed out President are not being questioned. But a special envoy is a special envoy, who goes on specific errands like an itinerant busybody for missions both political and economic, on behalf of the leader of the government. Generally speaking, such lofty jobs are supernumerary, and are invariably proximate to the seat of power. It demands both the proximity and confidence of the top man for carrying out extraordinary assignments on the part of any special envoy. The Kissingers of the US, the D.P. Dhars of India and the Ismail Fahmis (lately

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If you talk of unobtrusive diplomatic moves, which are not always done through career diplomats but political confidantes, Mr. K.G. Mustafa in his exclusive loyalty is there in Beirut to do the leg work.

appointed as the Foreign Minister) of Egypt are the embodiments of such supernumerary functions outside their national boundary. Even our Mr. Shamsul Huq had a stint of nomadic diplomacy when he undertook a much needed tour of South East Asia, particularly of Hanoi, preceded by a similar errand undertaken by Mollah Jalaluddin in the Middle-East. But curiously the latest special envoy of the Prime Minister will be based in Geneva with the necessary paraphernalia of a super-diplomat with his functions undefined. He will be flying a flag as our real Ambassador in Switzerland is privileged to do.

The creation of such a job obviously suggests that his primary mission, as and when required to be undertaken, will relate to Western Europe where we are already fairly well-represented through our own embassies. The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe should not fall under his purview since our diplomatic efforts in this region are not known to be deficient with such persons as K.M.S. Rahman and A.R.S. Doha doing their jobs. The European Economic Community is also taken care of through our Ambassador in Brussels, who is concurrently accredited to the EEC. The aid-missions or the probings for external assistance are not his forte either. Those are the exclusive domain of the planners, and the aid negotiators, who are sufficiently assisted by the economic ministers in the respective embassies. Even the lobbying for an entry into the United Nations does not warrant an extra-territorial office in Switzerland. Similarly, the Middle-East (West Asia) does not need a special envoy.

If you talk of unobtrusive diplomatic moves, which are not always done through career diplomats but political confidantes, Mr. K.G. Mustafa in his exclusive loyalty is there in Beirut to do the leg work. Hence, it seems that the special envoy in Mr. Abu Sayeed Chowdhury is left with no work but all sport in the 'playground of Europe'. Such an expensive endowment

is baffling indeed, and possibly without precedence anywhere any time.

The entire episode of making an envoy of a President-on-holiday is not unusual. What is unusual is the redundancy of the exercise for which the nation has to spend hard-earned foreign currency. And we all know today, through the courtesy of the Bangladesh Bank release on foreign exchange reserve, that hard currencies are difficult to come by. Ironically, this incremental investment in diplomacy has been made at a time when we have been hearing of economy measures in the Bangladesh embassies abroad. The government has already started stripping the embassies of superfluous functionaries and is trimming their budgets. At least seven diplomatic personnel holding various positions in different embassies have been recalled on account of this economy drive. If they were costing us pennies, the new special envoy is costing pounds. May we ask why, and beg an answer from the Government?

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Special powers bill: Positive resistance must come

Thus close on the heels of legalising the extra-legal actions of the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini, the Parliament saw the introduction of the Special Powers Bill through the good offices of the Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister.

It was a week of ceremonial banquets and unceremonious blunders. From the airport reception to the parliamentary audition to the Yugoslav President, the comedy of errors was unending. Between embarrassments and accolades, the august visit of President Tito came to an end as he and his entourage took off for Nepal after talks, twitters and a river cruise.

If the Parliament excelled in making a comedy of its special session, it did not however fail to enact the tragedy of another repressive law the very next day. Thus close on the heels of legalising the extra-legal actions of the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini, the Parliament saw the introduction of the Special Powers Bill through the good offices of the Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister.

The bill seeks the sanction of special powers for preventive detention, speedy trial and effective punishment of offences of grave nature including those against the state. The bill also empowers the government to suspend the activities of an association including a union or a political party for a period not exceeding six months if their activities are considered prejudicial to the national interests.

The proposed legislation epitomizes all the penal and anti-democratic aspects of the Security Act of 1952, the Public Safety Ordinance of 1968 and the hated Bangladesh Scheduled Offence (Special Tribunal) Order (P.O. 50). Since these will become redundant with the passage of the new bill, the authors of the bill have mercifully sought the repeal of the above three, as a token of their respect for democratic values and principles. No wonder, Mr. Monaranjan Dhar was half eloquent in his surprise indictment of P.O. 50 the other day.

One may recall here that some such bill was to be presented during the June session of the Parliament but was later withdrawn because of opposition by some members of the Awami League Parliamentary Party spear-headed by Mr. Sirajul Huq and Mr. Moinul Hussain. The bar associations all over the country including the High Court Bar Association resolved against the enactment of such a repressive law and also demanded the repeal of P.O. 50. The withdrawal of the bill engendered the expectation that it had been shelved although sceptics thought otherwise. The introduction of the Special Powers Bill only confirms the suspicion of the sceptics that the ruling party was merely biding its time to steamroll the bill through by a brute majority.

The strategy of the ruling party in respect of evolving a mechanism for repression and control has a pattern of its own. When the movement against the Press and Publication Ordinance was getting more organised and challenging, the government feigned retreat and conceded to the demand of repeal by actually doing it. But simultaneously, the ruling party replaced it with another act called the Printing Press and Publication Act with similar constraints but under a different facade. This clever ploy has temporarily succeeded in halting the movement with baits and persuasions necessitating a more positive struggle for the journalists and writers. Similarly, the growing opposition to detention without trial and the harassment of Opposition cadres and dissenters under P.O. 50 coupled with vocal dissent from members of the ruling party, put the government on the defensive. But it was only a tactical retreat.

The introduction of the Special Powers Bill in this session preceded by the vesting of extra-ordinary powers in the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini clearly brings out the fact that they needed some respite to work out the mechanism of repression which shall be hundred per cent fail-safe. And in doing so, the ruling party has decided to ignore all protestations both within and without the party. Gullible

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The ruling class is no doubt a paper tiger. But with total alienation from the people, the paper tiger can turn into a vicious monster before it admits its final defeat.

as we are, the authors of the bill will now try to convince us as to how angelic they have been in repealing the Security Act, the Safety Ordinance and the Presidential Order No. 50.

There is an element of compulsion in the latest move by the ruling party. Ridden by crisis within, and fraught with appalling economic problems gaping at them, they have decided to resolve the crisis through repression, and a naked one at that. The politics of persuasion and threat, vaunted heroism and glib self-righteousness have failed to work. Hence they have opted for the mobilisation of the coercive machineries and black laws in their final bid to stick to power in order to protect the vested interests within and without the country. The attempt at such mobilisation does not necessarily mean that they have not been doing it all these days to contain the struggle for democracy and freedom. It only means that they have to lend a legal framework to sanctify the rule of repression.

In the face of such a posture taken by the ruling party, the need of the hour is a positive struggle against the government. Such a positive struggle requires unity for its success and for the defeat of reaction in Bangladesh. Although the prospects of unity seem dim at the moment, political compulsions and popular pressure will shortly lead to such a unity of the left-democratic forces. The statement of Maulana Bhashani given in the course of an interview with the Daily Janapad clearly underlines this need. And his observation about the thrust of the government coercive machineries is not a passing comment. It is a reality.

The ruling class is no doubt a paper tiger. But with total alienation from the people, the paper tiger can turn into a vicious monster before it admits its final defeat. We must remember one thing: the ruling party may make blunders in welcoming dignitaries. But it shall not, and cannot afford to blunder away its rule of repression unless it is fought with resolute determination and in a united manner by the left-democratic forces of this country.

Successful hartal: Government resorts to coercion. United movement needed

Two successful hartals in three weeks at the call of the JSD and the serving of an ultimatum deadlined March 15, have brought into sharp focus two things. First, the ruling establishment is becoming increasingly defensive in its compulsion to counter the growing thrust of the mass opposition parties, and secondly, the speculative nature of the action programme as determined by the JSD in advancing their stipulated struggle to a higher stage. These two aspects call for serious attention for a clear understanding of the political milieu in Bangladesh.

It is interesting to note that the demeanour of the government has undergone discernible changes between one hartal and another over the last two years. For instance, in the hartals of 1973, in which the NAP(B) acted as the vanguard, the attempts to disrupt them were fairly unorthodox through the application of private terror. The law enforcing agencies in those instances were merely used for rear-guard actions and as a cover for the extra-legal swoop of the gun-toting gangsters of the Awami variety. Over time, the potency of private terror as designed by the ruling classes in the shape of various bahinis has progressively waned owing to (a) the internal contradiction and conflicts in the ruling classes, and (b) the objective situation which has turned much more unfavourable following the exposure of the power-elite in its economic, political and private misdeeds. The overt aggression of private terror has thus been rendered relatively ineffective by resistance without,

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The hartals of January 20 and February 8, 1974 saw the abdication of private terror in favour of agencies of the state like the Rakkhi Bahini, the BDR and the police.

and erosion within. As a result, the ruling establishment is now falling back more and more on the recognised instruments of coercion otherwise known as the law enforcing agencies, and the use of black laws as against stark terror.

If the proceedings of the hartal of April, 1973 on the three-point demand of the hunger-striking Maulana Bhashani bear out the role of private terror at its height, the hartals of January 20 and February 8, 1974 saw the abdication of private terror in favour of agencies of the state like the Rakkhi Bahini, the BDR and the police. The aggression of such agencies on January 20 was more noticeable than on February 8 ostensibly on account of the restrictive order of Section 144. And the success of the hartals on both the occasions necessitated a studied defense on the part of the law enforcing agencies rather than a compulsive counteraction which would have led to eruptions of violence. This is, however, no act of kindness on the part of the government, as some would have us believe. The strategy and mechanism of aggression through private and state instruments are always limited by the political realities obtaining in a particular socio-political matrix. Hence the shift.

The shift does not necessarily mean that the compulsions to curb the thrust of popular opposition to the ruling classes do not exist anymore. Those do exist and possibly much more than before. Because the ruling political junta is now trying to create a more durable and effective mechanism to safeguard its political and economic power. And all the signs are there. From the rhetoric of repression, they are now slowly but surely moving towards the creation, enshrinement and strengthening of the instruments of coercion and institutionalisation of those anti-people acts and laws.

To come to the second aspect, the two strikes with all their aftermath of arrests and police action have

also exposed the uncertain posture of the sponsors in advancing their struggle. The demonstrative value of the success of the hartals aside, these have hardly achieved anything in the form of mobilisation of popular opinion on specific issues and in providing lead to the people for a more positive movement.

Strikes are no substitutes for revolutions nor are they the prelude to the overthrow of a government, however anti-people and retrograde that government may be. Writing on strikes in *Holiday* in the issue of December 15, 1968, Badruddin Umar observed: "The political application of strikes are always limited in their scope and they do not aid the overthrow of the political system itself. It is, in fact, a half-way measure for correcting certain injustices and irrationalities in the socio-economic system... Social and economic exploitations are effected through appropriate institutions and the strike as a political weapon tends to weaken the foundations of such institutions."

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Why have the armed forces been called out?

The very nature of the operations by the armed forces precludes constitutional guarantees and thereby renders them irrelevant in a given situation.

There is nothing spectacular in the deployment of the armed forces on a national scale in Bangladesh. In fact, the whole episode falls quite short of spectacularity by the very nature of the invocation by the Prime Minister that admits of an emergency without having to pronounce it. Such ambivalence is obviously born out of political necessity. Nevertheless, this can as well lead to both constitutional and functional tangles for what those are worth.

Speaking constitutionally, the executive order calling upon the armed forces to perform certain specified duties in aid of the civil administration indirectly infringes on fundamental rights which per se have not been suspended. A rule of emergency—which it is, and is not—does not admit of constitutional prerogatives and is no respecter of basic rights even if it operates strictly within the limits of the given terms of reference.

The very nature of the operations by the armed forces precludes constitutional guarantees and thereby renders them irrelevant in a given situation. What, however, can happen is that, at its best, it acts as a leveller of all and sundry irrespective of group or individual affiliations, and at its worst, it simply degenerates into a frightening ploy of the power-elite which has exhausted all other avenues for resolving its crises of governance.

By the look of it, the pressing of the armed forces into action is a compromise between the rule of emergency and parliamentary pretences. In the former, the armed forces play the pivotal role in supersession of all; in the latter, the ruling party rules the roost through the Parliament and the government.

And as it appears, this compromise was necessary for the political government in order to retain its tottering power-base and yet opt for some other institutional support to stem the rot of disintegration in the power structure.

Such a compromise can only result in an unworkable diarchy of the rule of emergency and the rule of the Parliament at the same time. But it is extremely difficult to strike a complementarity between them and thereby attain the completion of the specific tasks as detailed to the armed forces of Bangladesh.

The inherent contradictions between an emergency and a parliamentary situation will lead either (a) to a clash between the respective institutions or (b) for some time to an inimical forbearance of each other resulting in total immobility in terms of attainment of tasks. The compromise may thus defeat its very purpose resulting in either a clash or a state of limbo.

The second alternative of stalemate cannot, however, continue for long since the objective situation demands some kind of attainment and the first alternative is more likely to happen causing a rupture at the institutional level with one institution coming on top of the other. As it happened in all such cases, the rule of emergency will ultimately have the better of the rule of Parliament slowly but surely with the latter standing thoroughly discredited in the public esteem.

Earlier deployments: Let me talk in more concrete terms. This is the third time that the armed forces have been called out to perform certain limited tasks. In the middle of 1973, the army was deployed in 'operation ration card and abandoned houses' in the cities. The operation began with a thud and ended with a whimper since on the very first day in Dhaka the army action to evict some 12 illegal occupants of abandoned houses was immediately taken out of the terms of reference, rendering the whole operation perfunctory. It was a pity to see the armed forces acting as surrogates

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of the tax-collectors and rationing officers, with the city area population held captive under the spell of a not-too-welcome curfew.

The second time the armed forces were pressed into action was during the latter part of 1973 when they were ordered to carry out localised operations against 'miscreants' and 'anti-social' elements in Barisal, Khulna, Jessore, Kushtia, Rangpur and Rajshahi. The catch of the armed forces on duty in those areas caused serious embarrassment to the ruling party, and in some cases, the army had to be withdrawn at the instance of some Awami League hierarchs. If the army had succeeded in bringing back a sense of relief by rounding up the local thugs who thrived under the patronage of the ruling party, that turned out to be a mere temporary remission. The long hands of political power overreached the army's tentacles, and in no time the 'socialist cadres' of the ruling Awami League were back in their secure sanctum to carry on unabated with their economic and political banditry. It is no use naming names because they are known to all.

This is the third time that the armed forces are being deployed on a national scale to deal with subversion, smuggling, recovery of illegal arms and black-marketing. But the situation is different from the earlier ones both qualitatively and quantitatively. In the earlier two situations, the use of the armed forces was made by the government to attain specific objectives in specific areas and the role of the armed forces was not in supersession of the civil authority. Notwithstanding the lack of desired results on account of blatant political interference, the suzerain authority and control lay in the civil administration.

This time, however, it is a different story. It is true that the armed forces have been brought in for a limited purpose. But the semantics of the order given by the Prime Minister clearly betray his total lack of confidence in his own civil and political machinery to combat the

problems besetting the country. The problems are surely not of an emergency nature because they do not pertain to foreign aggression, civil strife or even natural calamities. A potential threat to the established government does not also exist. It is simply the mundane economic and administrative problems which have snowballed over the last two and a half years because of the sheer greed of the ruling coterie and flagrant violation of the norms of governance by their own people. The civil administration has broken down under the weight of its own rulers and their different factions. These factions represent the different sides of the same coin. But between themselves the rulers have almost succeeded in burying the future of civilian politics in Bangladesh.

The deployment of the armed forces is thus to be seen in this perspective and as the abdication of civil authority to military rule. The irony is that the armed forces did not have to ask for it. It came to them in spite of their own selves and it is possible that they may be stuck with it for years from now.

Tragedy for ruling party: It is a tragedy of our times that a mass political party, which had all the requisites to be able to design a democratic institutional framework, has failed in its historical task. Never before a political party could turn into such an antithesis to production, distribution, administration and economic development as has been the case with the ruling party. Whether it is the Jubo League or the Chhatra League, the Volunteer Force or the Sramik League, the ruling party in all its manifestations is an impediment to national development. If they are now falling out with each other, that is precisely because of the total crisis in government and their inability to grapple any more with the challenge of administration either through political persuasion or strong-arm tactics. The party apparatus of Awami League, as it stands today, has run into obsolescence both for the purpose of governance and for the politics

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it is supposed to preach. Consequently, it is now faced with destruction in its present form and is now destroying itself through its own doings.

The sudden improvement in their manner of speech is now quite noticeable. While abuse was their only forte until the other day, the Awami League leaders are now talking, as if penitently, and that too to prove to the world that they have not yet gone out of business. But are they really in business today? Surely no more as a mass political party deriving its power from the people. But it does exist as an adjunct to the government machine, drawing its strength and sustenance from the government itself and above all from the charisma of the Prime Minister. And with its loss of utility, Awami League, with its galaxy of talking leaders, is gradually going out of business.

The Prime Minister, too, may not come to its salvation. Notwithstanding his deep involvement in mass politics and strong partisan nature, he transcends his own political party. In his compulsion to retain power, he may, and will, gradually renounce his own platform and lean on institutional support in the army and the bureaucracy. He has seemingly chosen the path of a compromise between emergency rule and parliamentary pretences because he possibly wants to leave the rest to time. And who does not know that under the circumstances of total failure of his government, he has very little option left?

It how seems clear that the operations of the armed forces will preclude politics because the problem is not really political but one of governance. If there are elements within the ruling party or their collaborators in the CPB and NAP (Moscow) who think that the armed forces will rescue the discredited politics of the regime and the resultant ills, they are sadly mistaken. The armed forces, like any other patriotic institutions of the country, has a greater stake in the nation than in a particular political group or regime. Had it been a partisan force

like the so-called Mujib Bahini or even the Rakkhi Bahini in its present form, it would have possibly done the dirty work for the power-elite.

Notwithstanding the vested interest that they may have in power, their role is likely to be confined to the terms of reference. The difference will be that this time it has to be, and probably will be, independent of political interference unlike in the earlier two situations, and that it will be acting in supersession of the civilian (political) administration because of the abdication of the latter in favour of army control in areas of normal administration.

There is another motivating factor for the armed forces. They have been brought in at a time when things have come to a total pass. If they cannot do anything worthwhile to prove their mettle, they run the risk of being discredited themselves. And that is why they may not hesitate to strike at the root because their stakes are high indeed.

In any event, the deployment of the armed forces is an euphemism for emergency rule. This compromise cannot last for long. It must, and will, give rise to a new power combination in Bangladesh.

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The plan and the planners: Cycle of lies leads to disaster

If a lot of paper and ink has gone into the writing of the Plan, the taxpayers can only complain about the waste and bear with their miseries.

Amidst political doldrums everyone seems to have forgotten the Planning Commission. It has, as if, slid into oblivion from a height of supereminence that it enjoyed over the last two and a half years. Much of it was, however, assumed by the planners themselves, than was allotted to them, even as they put on their ministerial plumes.

If a lot of paper and ink has gone into the writing of the Plan, the taxpayers can only complain about the waste and bear with their miseries. This wee bit of wastage has unfortunately turned out to be the proverbial straw which breaks the camel's back. Meanwhile, the Plan document has completely flunked in the very first year despite assertions to the contrary.

Following the presentation of the Annual Development Plan in June, 1974 by the Finance Minister Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed who was also the Planning Minister at that time, we expressed our guarded scepticism about its success. The Finance Minister, however, in conjunction with his consortium of academic planners would not admit of any shortfall both in the domestic front as also in the anticipated foreign aid inflow. Whereas the Annual Plan envisaged a revenue surplus of 155 crore takas and 352 crore takas worth of foreign aid respectively, the extent of shortfall in both instances is appalling. It now seems that revenue shortfall may go up to over 200 per cent and the foreign aid in the public sector programme is just not forthcoming.

The critical situation which has driven the first but the most decisive nail into the coffin of the First Five-Year planners is the drastic shortfall in projected revenue

receipts. Secondly, they planned the annual programme of the first year of the Five-Year Plan with an admitted reliance on 67 per cent foreign aid without identifying the sources and thereby failed in obtaining the required quantum for financing the projects as envisaged under the ADP.

In our article entitled 'Not the Whole Truth' published in Holiday on July 15, 1973, we ventured to show how several items of revenue are inflated and several items of expenditures deflated to present a respectable revenue surplus. Only five items were taken up for the purpose of discussion like the nationalised industries, sales of savings bank certificates, sales tax and the like which by themselves reduce the net revenue by about 100 crore takas necessitating much greater bank borrowing than the stipulated 18 crores takas.

As one lie leads to another, the planners were caught in this vicious cycle. The projection of exports, production, yield of jute and other cash crops also suffered from similar dishonest window dressing. But why? Was it simple naivete? Only the planners can answer this question.

The second question is much more important since it is in conflict with the socialist avowal of self-reliance and as such is destined to create a hiatus in the expected rate of development and the actual stagnation. In fact, the planners buried the principle of self-reliance at the very outset by tying economic development with foreign aid. Even the introductory chapter of sermonisation in the 549-page plan document could not rationalise this strange compulsion on the part of the planners to rely on exogenous variables like foreign aid.

This overt reliance on foreign aid, which just about everybody knows is no giveaway, coupled with the failure to mobilise domestic resources has already resulted in making Bangladesh more dependent on external resources, the major portion of which can be

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supplied only by the countries like the United States, Japan, West Germany, France, the United Kingdom and others.

The inflow of foreign aid, as far as it is known, has not as yet crossed 50 per cent of the stipulated quantum. The halting flow applies as much to the Western world as it does to the Eastern bloc. And in both instances, arm twisting seems to be fairly common. Apart from other considerations of policy and politics, the donors are refusing to release machineries and goods committed earlier unless their prices are refixed on the basis of current international prices. Along with it, new commitments from both the blocs have either not been made or have been frozen.

The role of foreign aid is not divorced from the dividends it is supposed to earn. Concurrently, it is also contingent upon the performance of the donee and the extent of utilisation made by it. Even if the motive of the donor countries is not suspect in the case of Bangladesh, the performance and utilisation coupled with the siphoning of resources to foreign banks have considerably slowed the flow of foreign aid into Bangladesh. For instance, the year 1973-74 began with more than 600 million dollars worth of foreign credits and grants in the pipeline. The year will end with more than two thirds of amount remaining unutilised. Add to it the record harvest of commodity grants, reaped by Bangladesh in the wake of its misfortune, from the world community which come to an astounding figure of 200 billion dollars.

Everyone knows by now what happened to that fabulous sum and who is to blame for it. Hence, unless the rate of utilisation is geared up and the process of transfer of resources is halted through streamlining of the administrative apparatus, on the one hand, and stringent corrective measures, on the other, the flow of aid with or without(?) strings will continue to be slow.

The technique of arm twisting does not seem to be the sole occupation of the Western donors. The Soviet

Union, which has journeyed from proletarian revolution to social imperialism, is now no less adept in this. The high-powered Soviet economic delegation which has been and still is exploring Bangladesh like they have done with the hydrography of the Bay of Bengal, is not a kindly lot either. Excepting the on-going projects inherited from the Pakistan days, the Soviet Union has not given a single project aid for the socialist development of Bangladesh. The present delegation is reported to have been fairly non-committal about the outcome of their findings and the possibility of their participation.

Like the West, they are also looking for political and neo-colonial dividends in the Third World which have been traditionally the neo-colonies of the west. The compulsion of the Russian state bourgeoisie to grapple with the problem of overprotection and the surplus value created out of their own revision of Marxism has led them to explore new markets, on one hand, and their ideological contradiction with China has led them to look for captive lands in South Asia, on the other. Bangladesh fits into their design so well that they want to have both economic and strategic control of this country. One thing is noticeable: Russian aid to the Third World and also in Bangladesh consists predominantly of heavy and strategic goods—metallurgical products, military equipment, machinery, etc. In Bangladesh in particular, the Soviet interest is curiously limited to the strategic sectors—MIG 21, trawlers, etc. The questionnaire that is being served by the Soviet economic delegation to the government functionaries for their understanding of our needs betrays their singular interest in the strategic sector. (This aspect can, however, be dealt with separately in view of the strategic position of Bangladesh and the Soviet hostility towards China.) "The repayments for these loans (mostly at two and a half per cent interest) have taken the form of strategic raw materials not available in Russia in sufficient quantities or primary

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products...by making these countries dependent on capital goods produced in Russia, the Russian state bourgeoisie ensure its technological subjugation... financial dependence is ensured in two ways. Firstly the nature of the products exchanged results in an exchange of unequal values to the advantage of Russia. Secondly the efforts to meet repayment schedules by expanding production of traditional exports has retarded industrialisation in many dependent countries." (Russia from Proletarian Revolution to Social Imperialism by Rohini Ranaji; Economic and Political Weekly).

The above has been stated only to show that aid, whether it is imperialist or social imperialist, is an instrument of subjugation. And our planners have exactly pushed this country to that furthest brink of dependence where we have to choose either. Years of academic misfeasance by these half-baked Marxists has led us to economic stagnation. While their plan aims at creating new Kulaks in the rural sector in the name of the green revolution, they have successfully destroyed whatever little industrial base we had inherited from Pakistan days by thoroughly ruining the entrepreneurial abilities of the Bengalees by their so-called experiment in socialism. The question is why, and they must answer the question. They invariably will try to pass on the buck to a corrupt and unsure political leadership. But isn't abetment as bad as the commission of the crime?

The rituals of flood relief

In a country where politics is profit, floods and cyclones only sharpen the edge of the Shylock's knife. The price is more than a pound of flesh of which we have none but the rotten ones. Dead upon dead, the mound is growing in the watery grave which has already snatched away 36,000 square miles of territory in 18 out of 19 districts.

Like a nation abused and defiled by a handful of sinners, the Bengalees stand abandoned under the discomforting watch of the world community. It is no longer the inhuman callousness of the Pakistani colonists nor is it the sheer vengefulness of nature. This abandonment is because of lack of faith in the inherent goodness of a government that chose to sacrifice a nation on the altar of the cannibalistic greed of a new coterie of power-elite. No wonder that the bourgeois humanism of the West has suddenly dried up; and the socialist conscience of the East is refusing to melt.

In this backdrop, the ritual of relief and succour seems comical enough. The monetary grants from a bankrupt treasury can hardly meet the contingency. The buzz of the 6,000-taka-an-hour helicopter carrying our soft-hearted ministers only adds to the agony of the suffering millions. As the toll rises, affecting about 30 million people on the 58th day of the flood havoc, the Bengalees are desperately looking for the Noah's Ark. There is no sight of it yet.

Yet no price is too high for our rulers in their mindless chauvinism that curiously bids for the Awamisation of the calamitous flood. In a national crisis of this magnitude, compounded by the snowball effect of 31 months of unrestricted plunder and transfer of resources by the power-elite, the response of the

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government borders on banality. And add to this the scandals of relief that had rocked the world with a shock of disbelief and derision during 1972 and 73. The sceptics naturally ask both within and without the country: What good is this contribution if it does not reach the people?

This question looms larger than our rulers would like to admit. And this is being asked from continent to continent, from newspaper to newspaper, from person to person and even by those Bengalees who have some spare cash in these days of utter hardship. Let us make it very clear that what is withholding the inflow of generous contribution is not the cruel apathy to the suffering humanity but a complete lack of confidence in the administration of relief as epitomised by the Bangladesh Red Cross and its chief. It is the unbridled corruption and the institutionalisation of the same in Bangladesh that has thrown the nation into this indifferent tragedy.

I know I shall tread on a menacing subject when I talk of the Bangladesh Red Cross and its chief. Yet I dare it because it is imperative. The statements and counterstatements between the Red Cross Chief and the leader of the opposition, Mr. Ataur Rahman Khan are not going to resolve the issue. Mr. Khan has only performed his duty in demanding the replacement of the Chairman of the Red Cross. Or else, no assistance will be forthcoming, and I repeat no assistance whatsoever.

Thanks to the inordinate plunder of 1972-73 (two billion dollars went out like a bubble), the legend of Bangladesh gradually but surely came to be substituted by the Bangladesh Red Cross and its chief the world over. Whatever be the truth of these allegations, corruption came to be synonymous with the Bangladesh Red Cross and its chief like that of the Watergate scandal that saw the fall of the most powerful president in the world. If President Nixon decided to put the nation's

interest before his own and chose to bow out of the presidency, we wonder why the Red Cross Chairman should hold his own and not relinquish his post in the interest of the flood-affected Bengalees. After all, he cannot force them to donate nor hold them to ransom by storming into their homes with five gunmen as he did in a marriage party in the last week of June. The episode put everybody to shame. And for all I know, shame is a revolutionary sentiment.

The credibility gap of the government does not only relate to such institutions as the Bangladesh Red Cross but also in its erratic and often wild reactions to a number of other things. It seems that the President of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce who is now sulking in detention had unknowingly applied salt to the government's injury by making a statement on the availability of salt. The ridiculously harsh action against the loyalist President of the Chamber of Commerce was followed up by the sacking of the news editor and a reporter of a government-owned newspaper. This is a preposterous thing that can ever happen in a modern state. This is sadism at its height and senselessness at its worst.

A calamity or an emergency can only be met with cool planning, firm determination and total mobilisation of the nation's human and material resources. One cannot put prices in the prison or arrest the flood under the Special Powers Act. It is a national crisis that needs to be combated by united national-effort. We are all aware of the limitations. But then why not make an attempt by putting in our best to save the people and the country? The Prime Minister must rise above his political and personal prejudices to give a call to the nation to assist him in this gigantic task. Because politics and flood are two different things. Let him come forward to speak for the dead mouths or else the dead mouths will speak for themselves.

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The crises of dependencies

It is somewhat more respectable than a protectorate (Sikkim and Bhutan for example) in so far as it can have a linear military, economic and ideological dependence on one or more in a structured system.

The crises in Bangladesh are much deeper than are caused by floods or sheer misgovernance. They are the inevitable predicaments of a nation-state whose political options are severely limited by the constraints of a dependency. The domestic political scenario in such dependencies develops in accordance with the pulls and compulsions of exogenous forces; and oftener than not, the survival, or the lack of it, of such dependencies is solely predicated upon variables arising out of a whole new set of power-relationships and alliances in an essentially world-imperialist complex.

A dependency falls into the broad spectrum of client states of one or a plurality of powers with the metropolis at its head and a hierarchy of subordinates under it. It is somewhat more respectable than a protectorate (Sikkim and Bhutan for example) in so far as it can have a linear military, economic and ideological dependence on one or more in a structured system.

Since the monolith of such structures has undergone erosion owing to contradictions within the hierarchy and also because of the national liberation wars in the Third World, the fate of the dependencies precariously hinges on the realignment of powers in a specific situation.

This realignment is occasioned by the changes in domestic and international environments, and is further complicated by the presence of crucial new parameters: the international currency crisis; trade rivalries within the capitalist camp; the Sino-Soviet dispute and the emergence of the Soviet Union as a social imperialist power; and competition for energy supplies.

Furthermore, the growth of new sub-regional powers like Iran (under the Shah), Israel, India and Brazil has become a new determinant in such new formations. The unity of objective, however, remains unchanged even under such new power-relationships and alliances in so far as they have a common objective of containing the national liberation wars in the Third World or to be more precise, the national democratic revolution in post-colonial societies.

It is in this perspective that we have to look at the Bangladesh crisis and the sudden abandonment of the dependency by its benefactors. Dependencies are seldom given up by the external powers that be, unless of course, there are other overriding considerations.

The perceptible changes in the power relationship centering on the volatile sub-continent over the last three years, particularly after the acquisition of nuclear capability by the newly emerged sub-regional power, India, may render the present geo-politics in the area totally redundant. In other words, in a global divide of superpower hegemony, small nation-states in the South Asian continent may as well be left to the dictates of a central power in the region.

If Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is finding himself alone in this breach and without any effective underwriter, it is primarily because his political stance runs counter to the above hypothesis. And this exactly explains the recent intention of the Western bourgeois press that the economy of Bangladesh is not viable, that it is a rotter which can only infect the rest of the sub-continental milieu and would, therefore, invite 'intervention from India' (Spectator Weekly of London).

The orchestration of this proposition is being cleverly synchronised with an attempt at integrating the Bangladesh economy with that of India by devious means. The initial stage of Bangladesh, however, witnessed a different kind of attempt which was a mere prelude to the present phase of attempted integration of

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what is being painted as a deficit Bangladesh economy. The initial stage saw the successful subordination of a jute-dependent economy to that of the Indian jute interest through such instruments as the jute policy and the expropriation of the national capital.

This was topped off by a complete blockage of private investments of the national capital even in sectors other than the nationalised ones. It was done in the name of socialism but was in fact a calculated manoeuvre aimed at economic regression to prepare for the ultimate integration with the Indian polity and the economy. The other instrument was currency which was revalued in great hurry to facilitate the process of subservience to the Indian economy.

It is all the more interesting to note here that Bangladesh is now being painted as a deficit economy ironically by those who had been the champions of the two economy theory in Pakistan days. The same set of economists who had proffered economic justifications for a viable nation-state in the eastern part of the subcontinent are willy-nilly lamenting over the deficit.

On the other hand, they can be accused of deliberately collaborating with the ensemble of political and economic interests in Bangladesh and India for turning a minor deficit into an insurmountable one by (a) arresting productivity under the fake slogan of socialism, and (b) abetting the merchant capital of India to denude the country of its real resources through conscious anti-growth and negative-growth economic policy.

The spectre of an unbridgeable deficit obviously raises the question of the political viability of Bangladesh unless of course it is underwritten constantly as a dependent nation by the metropolitan countries or integrated with a subregional power like India. And herein comes the question of new power alignments in South Asia and the consequent abandonment of the dependency of Bangladesh by the metropolitan countries in favour of sub-regional powers.

The crises of dependencies-II

The reluctant imperialists

The growth of sub-regional powers and their accession to the status of sub-imperialism under the benign patronage of one or the other super-power have necessitated changes in power-alignments in the Third World. In the context of Asia, the emergence of Iran (under the Shah) and India as sub-regional powers over the last decade or so, has conferred on them a new role in the neighbouring pastures for the containment of local conflicts, social disequilibrium, guerrilla uprising and revolution.

The equation of these intermediate sub-imperialist regimes with the two super-powers—which represent the two sides of imperialism—is often deceptively autonomous because these intermediate powers are integrated in the structured system of imperialism as subordinate units. They are allowed a share of the loot for their interventionary role in the cauldron of the Third World where revolutionary movements are on the rise.

In this particular role, such powers have been granted their own little hegemony over dependencies and client states. In the sixties, such dependencies or client states were directly administered by the metropolitan countries. But things have changed now owing to what Dr. Andre Gunder Frank describes as the accelerated qualitative transformation of the international division of labour during the present crisis of capitalist development.

The growth of India as a sub-regional power following the decapitation of Pakistan, and her acquisition of nuclear capability soon after her

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paramountcy over the subcontinent, can be seen as the direct outcome of the political milieu in the then East Bengal and the active support of the Soviet Union. In this particular context, the US role could have been deemed as inimical to India. But the US had employed a mix of tactics to preserve the US alliance with Pakistan while at the same time avoiding an irreconcilable breach with India. The changing pattern of Indo-US relationship in the last couple of years is indicative of this new power-alignment. If this swing makes a dent in the Soviet position in India, it is of marginal consequence in the overall equation between the US and the Soviet Union.

In fact, both would now prefer to collude with the sub-regional power of India for the prevention of losses of strategic regions to revolutionary movements and to maintain the status quo in favour of big power imperialism in South Asia.

Such a realignment makes the position of dependencies like Bangladesh vulnerable in so far as it limits their capacity to make the most of the competing demands and interests of imperialism and social imperialism. Thus what seemed to be a big-power rivalry over the spoils of Bangladesh between the USA and the USSR for strategic and other considerations soon turned out to be a competition in the short-run.

This does not mean that the competition has ceased. This only means that the competition will now centre on India with Bangladesh tagged to the latter as her immediate charge. In fact, it has always been so since December 16, 1971.

This is not an accident but part of a design. Bangladesh with her boiling pot and the unfulfilled desire for national liberation can always explode into violence and thereby threaten the status quo in the sub-continent by igniting insurgencies in the restive regions of Eastern India. Such a possibility is antithetical to the common objectives of the three relevant powers, that

is, India, the USA and the Soviet Union. And all three of them are poised against the Maoist spectre which has been haunting the region. The talk of 'Indian intervention' which is now becoming louder in the foreign press stems from this fear. And thanks to the dominant section of our rulers, the legal framework for such intervention has already been incorporated in the 25-year Friendship Treaty with India; and the economic justifications have been more than laid out by foisting an unequal complementarity on the Bangladesh economy with that of the Indian one through what is stated in the earlier article as a strategy of subordination first, integration later.

The new power-alignment and the relegation of the dependency of Bangladesh to the midwife of our independence, that is, India, has given rise to serious contradictions within the power elite-between those who are working for the ensemble of political and economic interests of the expansionist state of India and those representing the aspiration of national capitalists.

This accounts for the present phase of conflict between the servitors of the Indian merchant capital on the one hand, and the remnants of national capital in Bangladesh, on the other. Notwithstanding the fact that the ruling class, or more appropriately the clan, is essentially a united front of these two forms of capital and will tend to resolve their contradictions in the face of a total attack on capital itself by the masses, the latter represents the productive forces and is, therefore, well-poised against the antiproduction-conglomerate of interests whose precise objective is to integrate Bangladesh with the mainstream of eternal India.

Such an eventually is becoming more portentous with the change in the power-alignments over the sub-continent as enunciated in this article and the consequent fate of the dependency of Bangladesh in physical, military, and economic terms. In all these

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senses, Bangladesh is likely to become an appendage of the subregional power called India. In fact, by all counts it is a sub-nation in relation to India in military, economic and ideological terms.

The tragedy of Bangladesh is that her political options are severely limited by the constraints of a dependency, and that, notwithstanding Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's position to the contrary, the government is essentially an extension of an Indian mould, that is, the Mujibnagar government. This is an unpalatable statement but true nevertheless. And this malaise cannot be corrected without our having to go through the rigours of a national democratic revolution in the true sense of the term.

If the American or the Soviet superpowers play the role of reluctant imperialists in Bangladesh as it stands today, it will be for a different reason. The dirty job of intervention or policing is now assigned to the central power of India in the South Asian region.

The crises of dependencies—III

How viable is Bangladesh

Economics, some say, is a dismal science. But nothing could be more dismal than the economics of ruination, of pauperisation and of damnation. We are damned all the same. We have arrived at a point when we have to export floods and miseries for precious foreign exchange and import relief and indignity in lieu of our national pride.

No wonder we were hurt when Tony Clifton of Newsweek wrote: 'Bangladesh thinks that the world owes her a living.' He was simply making a bland political statement. This stark truth hurt our national pride, but nevertheless disappointed the few to whom aids and grants are big business.

If scores of such other global press reports are read with the summary trial of the Bangladesh economy as a dead one, then there are reasons for concern amongst all and sundry about the viability of Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign country.

Some of it has ostensibly been caused by the gross mismanagement of the affairs of the state over the last three years. Nevertheless, the bogey of non-viability may be a deliberate invention by the ensemble of political and economic interests within and without the country against the background of new power-alignments in South Asia.

The question has become so serious that no patriotic Bengali can ignore it any more. The question seems a natural corollary to what the Bangladesh economy has come to be in the last thirty-one months. But an a posteriori reasoning may reveal an element of conscious design in the whole business of turning a

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when Tony
Clifton of
Newsweek
wrote:
'Bangladesh
thinks that
the world
owes her a
living.'

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young throbbing nation into a regressive liability. This task was fulfilled through a step-by-step scheme of destruction and debilitation of a potential economy by the servitors of Indian merchant capital and the expansionist state of India. There is thus a method in this madness.

Bangladesh is poor. She is poor in terms of her level of income and resources. These are undeniable facts. But do these make any country economically unviable? Poor countries can and have become rich. Resources are neither definite nor constant; they are basically a function of technology.

Therefore, it is important to clearly understand what is meant by the term economic viability.

In the vulgar sense, one could define it as economic self-sufficiency. Such a definition is insufficient and misleading because the terms — deficit or self-sufficiency — are always relative to certain given norms. And furthermore, in the absolute sense no country is self-sufficient.

In the context of Bangladesh, economic viability can be defined in two senses. In the static sense, it would mean the capability to maintain the pre-independence economic equilibrium, or in other words, the 1969-70 levels of production, employment, income and consumption after the sudden rupture of her established pre-independence economic relations. In the dynamic sense, it would mean the capacity not only to maintain her past growth rate, but also to accelerate it. Thus viewed, the analysis of the economic viability of Bangladesh is a technical job to be performed by professional experts. We can only make some common sense observations.

Let us examine the economic viability of Bangladesh in the static sense of the term. In 1969-70, the gross national product of Bangladesh at market prices was Rs 3,438 crores; her exports and imports amounted to Rs 259 and Rs 348 crores respectively. Total

investment was about Rs 450 crores of which about Rs 367 crores were in the public sector. Revenue expenditure amounted to Rs 280 crores while the total tax revenue was only about Rs 170 crores. Foreign aid amounted to Rs 66 crores.

Thus on the assumption of unchanged conditions of production, the maintenance of the 1969-70 level of economic activities in 1972-73 would have involved a maximum investment of Rs 450 crores, revenue expenditure of Rs 350 crores (including the odd additional amount due to the establishment of a national government), export of Rs 259 crores and imports of Rs 348 crores.

The required total expenditure would have been around Rs 800 crores and the total available domestic resources would have been Rs 170 to Rs 270 crores (tax revenue 170 and private investment 100). Consequently the resource gap would have been around Rs 530 crores.

Other things being equal, how could Bangladesh bridge this resource gap? There were two ways of doing it: (a) by making a concerted effort to raise the level of the mobilisation of domestic resources, and (b) by borrowing from abroad.

It should not have been very difficult for Bangladesh to mop up at least 12 per cent of her GNP, i.e. about Rs 400 crores, as tax. Other countries at similar levels of development, and without having such large nationalised sectors, have done so. This would have reduced the required inflow of foreign resources to Rs 400 crores. Besides, for a new country like Bangladesh it would not have been difficult to mobilise this quantum of foreign resources.

Furthermore, it must be pointed out that with more realistic project planning and budgeting, the required amount of development investment could have been substantially reduced, say, by a further amount of about Rs 100 crores or so, without producing any

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adverse effects whatsoever on the levels of production and employment. Frills could have been cut out, wastage reduced, and investment directed to more productive and less capital-intensive projects and the like. No one having knowledge of the politics of development-planning of the pre-independence era could deny such obvious possibilities.

Moreover, because of the prevalence of high excess capacity, that is, unutilised capacities in our industrial plants, industrial production level could have been maintained without investment in new capacity.

The maintenance of the 1969-70, level of total expenditure is one aspect of the problem; the other is the maintenance of the volume of the total foreign trade. Of the total exports of Rs 259 crores in 1969-70 about Rs 210 crores were accounted for by four commodities, namely raw jute, jute manufactures, tea and paper. In spite of the fact that we lost a part of our market for jute manufactures to India during the struggle for liberation in 1971, given the requisite efforts it should not have been difficult to recapture our share of the market in 1972-73. We have had the comparative advantage in raw jute. The devaluation of the rupee or the fixation of a lower external value for the taka gave us an additional advantage in our competition with Indian jute and other competitive goods. The demand situation in the international market in 1972-73 was also equally conducive. Some of the other minor items of exports involving a total amount of about Rs 50 crores could have been exported, while most of such items could have been consumed domestically which would have reduced the imports of similar commodities.

Of our total imports of Rs 348 crores, only ten commodities accounted for Rs 227 crores: rice 35 crores, wheat 35, cotton yarn 33, cotton textiles 24, iron and steel 16, machinery 39, petroleum and petroleum products 10, oil seeds 12, tobacco 14 and cement 8 crores. These were important both for

development and consumption purposes and could have been paid for out of our own exports. The rest of our required imports, which could have been considerably reduced without very much impeding our development efforts, could have been financed through foreign aid.

Thus, judged by the attainable levels of expenditure and trade, it was not difficult for Bangladesh to maintain the 1969-70 level of economic activities in 1972-73.

What happens to this conclusion if our basic assumption of unchanged conditions of production is removed? In fact, for several important reasons, the conditions of production changed substantially in 1972-73. Firstly, a lot of damage was done to the country's infrastructure during the liberation struggle. Secondly, the exodus of the Pakistani managerial personnel had certain adverse consequences on the efficiency of industrial management. Thirdly, the nationalisation of the large-scale industries, banks and insurance companies, and of over 80 per cent of the foreign trade, had introduced a radical change in the structure of production and trade. Nevertheless, it would be agreed that only the first of the above mentioned negative factors is really important to our arguments. Because, given the requisite efforts and intent, the managerial hiatus could have been bridged, and the policy of nationalisation could and should have been made more conducive to the attainment of static economic viability.

The most exaggerated quantification of the total loss due to damaged infrastructure would not put the figure beyond Rs 1,000 crores. To this must also be added the difficult administrative and financial problems the country faced on account of fund shortage and rehabilitation of the refugees. In financial terms, these should not have involved more than Rs 500 crores. And it is now well-known that Bangladesh in 1972-73 had received a far larger amount than the estimated required

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Inflation indeed represents a changed condition of production, but it need not invalidate our basic argument.

sum of Rs 1,500 crores by way of humanitarian foreign aid and grants which, given proper utilisation, should have been adequate not only for maintaining the 1969-70 level of economic activities in 1972-73 but also for initiating economic growth at a reasonable rate in 1973-74.

Note that we have all through used our figures in Rupees rather than in Takas. This was partly due to the advantage of understanding the quantitative requirement of attaining static viability as defined by us and partly due to the technical difficulty in converting the rupee into taka both because of devaluation and inflation, especially the latter since the middle of 1972. Inflation indeed represents a changed condition of production, but it need not invalidate our basic argument.

In the first place, to the extent that a part of the inflation was caused by the need for deficit financing, it should have been conducive to augmenting the revenue resource of the government. In the second place, for well-known reasons, even 20 per cent of inflation in Bangladesh would not be due to the transmission of the same from abroad, although untiring attempts have been made towards the political capitalisation of international inflation.

In a certain sense, the dynamic economic viability depends upon the static viability. Once the latter is achieved, piloting of the economy towards appropriate growth would necessitate the requisite desire and effort. These are, of necessity, influenced by the immediate resource constraints. The requisite efforts would involve bold and realistic planning for the more efficient and productive use of existing resources so as to prepare the way for the creation of more resources through the initiation of desired technological changes in the economy. If these constraints, in the initial phase, restrict the rate of growth or a particular type of development, which would seem to be economically unviable in the short run, the political decision ought to have been more austere and demanding. It must never be forgotten that

impolitic decisions in such matters more frequently result in frustrating development effort without any economic reasons for such consequences. An example will make the point clear.

The Bengali members of the panel of economists for the so-called Fourth Plan of Pakistan had suggested a model of growth for Bangladesh for the years between 1970 and 1975 which involved a total domestic savings (investment) of Rs 2,615 crores and a net inflow of foreign resources amounting to Rs 1,435 crores in order to achieve a growth rate of 7.76 per cent per annum. Here was a model which, given the desired growth rate, involved an average rate of domestic savings of 14 per cent per annum. This model was governed more by the then prevalent conditions of political bargaining rather than hard-headed objective economic considerations. We characterise such decisions impolitic in the realm of planning for economic development.

We are of the firm opinion that our present economic predicament, on the basis of which even the economic viability of the country is being questioned by many, is mainly due to impolitic decisions in respect of economic planning and politics—financial mismanagement of the country.

A five year plan was formulated rather hurriedly on the basis of certain preconceived notions inherited from the experience of Pakistan, and was quite oblivious of the short-run adjustment problems that the country faced consequent upon her independence. That the solutions of the short-run adjustment problems were pre-requisites for the creation of the long-run conditions for our economic growth in the altered circumstance was totally forgotten by our planners in their pretentious zeal for the rather irrelevant historical analogy of the famous October Revolution. They also conveniently managed to forget that the Soviet Union did not have a five year plan till 1928. More damaging, however, had been the alleged declaration of politico-economic decisions by the

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professional planners to the political leaders without bothering about the administrative capacity and political bias of the latter, and the consequent miscarriage at the cost of the nation.

The mismanagement of the affairs of the government and the mishandling of the affairs of the nation are beyond dispute. Impolitic economic planning and policy-making were, of course, important contributing factors. But these could not have been the decisive factors. Given the administrative agility, some of the adverse consequences of bad planning could have been easily and expeditiously remedied. This was not done; instead the entire blame was and is being placed on the bureaucrats, making a scapegoat of them.

It is well known that between 1965 and 1970 the administration of former East Pakistan was primarily managed by Bangali bureaucrats. The so-called absorption capacity had increased to such an extent that it was no longer the deficiency of implementation capabilities which restricted the speed and pace of our economic development. After independence most of these bureaucrats stayed with the administration. The thrust of reactive nationalism stoked the creative administrative capacity of such people. But this did not happen: The opposite was the case.

The crises of dependencies-IV

A designed unmasked

The post-independence period in Bangladesh witnessed a sequence of events which was at once the product of blunders and a sequel to a long-range design. Blunders committed can be corrected with acts of prudence. But an unfolding design can never be countered without a political perception of the same and the all-important political will to defeat it.

Unfortunately, our leadership failed in both respects. They multiplied the blunders by allowing a state of corruption and incompetence to take root; and they staked our sovereignty by failing to perceive the design. Or even if they did, they lacked the autonomy to fight it with the necessary political will. The end-result has been disastrous in economic and political terms.

Sovereignty is not simply notional; it is the unfettered expression of the economic and the political will of a people who have decided to form a nation and establish a state. The national revolutionary wars are fought to wrest sovereignty from the colonialists, the imperialists and the expansionists by the concerned and the awakened masses. The predatory powers strive to stifle such struggle through direct intervention as in Vietnam, subtle annexation like that of Sikkim, a combination of economic warfare and political intrigue as in Chile.

These are the instances where the compulsion of the relevant powers has been total and immediate. In other instances, the infringement of national sovereignty is covertly done through neo-colonial machinations, setting up of puppet regimes and creation of a dependent bourgeoisie having a comprador character, and therefore,

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thoroughly dependent on the metropolitan bourgeoisie or their underlings in the region for their sustenance in power.

The case of Bangladesh is somewhat unique and to that extent unclassical. Because the new nation is as much the product of the national will and struggle as it is due to disruption of that will and struggle by exogenous interests—strategic, political and economic. These interests have their own interactions as evidenced from the shifting nature of their collusion and contradiction over Bangladesh in the first two years since independence. But the principal role is played by one of these interests because of its relative pre-eminence in the region consequent upon its attainment of paramountcy in the sub-continent. Thus what seemed a three-dimensional competition for dominance between the three relevant powers, namely, India, USSR and USA, turned out to be one-dimensional by 1974 following the beginning of new power-alignment in South Asia and the acceptance of India to the status of sub-imperialism by the leaders of the world imperialist complex.

The above is a restatement of what we attempted to hypothesize in the current series. Let us, however, remember that there has been no qualitative change in the situation following the new power alignment centering on the sub-continent. The long-range design, which was at work since the beginning of the struggle for independence, looks more real than before. And this brings us to the question of the economy of Bangladesh which, as we have argued in this series, should not have fallen into this rut unless there was a method in this madness.

The bogey of the so-called economic non-viability of Bangladesh, as we have insisted earlier in the series, was the product of a twin strategy of 'subordination and integration' by a power group in the sub-continent in pursuit of its grand design of expansion. What are the instrumentalities of this expansionist design? If one goes into this question one discovers an emerging pattern in the entire proceedings enacted in Bangladesh in the early days of our independence and also in subsequent times.

The main instrument in this regard is the dominant section of the ruling group and a powerful segment of the government. As we have asserted earlier in this series, the government of Bangladesh is essentially an extension of the then Mujibnagar government—thoroughly conditioned by the Indian design after long nine months of careful nurturing in exile. Here was a governmental compact which was overly dependent on Indian advice and amenable to 'friendly' persuasions; and to that extent it had developed contradictions with the fighting forces in the Mukti Bahini and other patriotic political elements who had wanted liberation without bondage. The Mujibnagar government was also characterised by the iron-clad supremacy of an entente between some thoroughbred India-oriented politicians of different descriptions and some hand-picked civil servants and other elements. Those who dared resent such an entente were either reduced to relative impotency or hounded out by the Indian intelligence on varied pretexts. (It goes to the credit of the Mukti Bahini leaders who defied such obstructions and inducted a large number of fighting youths irrespective of their political affiliations). The alleged internment of Maulana Bhashani who was kept incommunicado is an extreme example of the Indian sway over the Mujibnagar government. And Maulana Bhashani was a member of the advisory(?) council to the government of Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed.

Without going into the unsavoury details of the period, it can be said that the long-range design of 'subordination and integration' was put into operation right from the word go through an obliging, dependent and pliant government. It may be recalled that Bangladesh had had governance in absentia for a week since the fall of Dhaka until the Indian army, euphemistically called the allied forces, gave clearance to the Mujibnagar set-up to make its return pilgrimage to Dhaka.

The foremost task of this new set of rulers was to dampen the reactive nationalism of the people, and those

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The so-called absorption capacity increased to such an extent that it was no longer the deficiency of implementation capabilities which restricted the speed and pace of our development.

who manned the administrative machine, by raising the bogey of collaboration. This was not done simply for securing jobs and positions of which they had expropriated plenty; this was done with a clear view to remoulding and restructuring the administration in line with the grand design of what we described as 'subordination and integration'.

This attempt was supplemented by the importation of Indian advisers at all levels, particularly for the purpose of running and reorganising the administration. Was this necessary? We have stated in the earlier article in the series that between 1965 and 1970, the administration of former East Pakistan was primarily manned by Bangali bureaucrats, and the so-called absorption capacity increased to such an extent that it was no longer the deficiency of implementation capabilities which restricted the speed and pace of our development.

Even if we make allowance for the element of collaboration, which was few and far between, and the fact that, some of the senior officers were trapped in Pakistan, the Bengali administrative and managerial personnel available in Bangladesh at that point of time should have been able to run the administration of the new state as smoothly and efficiently as was possible in those circumstances.

This was not done because it was not intended to be done. The process was intended to be reversed since the return of the Sheikh; but it still continued to vitiate the nation with all its consequences. No doubt, major adjustments were made in the administrative echelons to make it more cohesive; but the threat of PO 9, instant suspensions and penal postings continued to hang around their neck. The other factors contributing towards the qualitative decline of the administration are: (a) indiscriminate political appointments to 'unworthies', (b) intimidation of the administrative personnel by political quarters, and (c) a recruitment policy without any regard for

merit or competition. Such a situation is highly conducive to manipulation for the grand design of 'subordination and integration'.

This design can be more clearly seen in the economic sphere and it is in this field that the strategy has achieved a large measure of success. Beginning with the refixation of the Bangladesh taka at one-to-one ratio with the Indian currency, a jute policy which is nothing less than anti-national in content and objective, nationalisation without any regard to 'accounting and 'control', there appears to be a naked attempt at subordinating our economy to that of India, particularly Eastern India. The theory of complementarity is the pet theme for those who wield power in this sector. The 'benefits' of Farakka and the absence of substantial smuggling are the only objectives of their research.

We shall not go into the details of the economic policy like the fiscal policy, the jute policy and nationalisation since we have done scores of lengthy exercises on these subjects over the last three years. And some of the exercises have been done by persons who are professionally as competent as the government economists are.

However, it will suffice to say, that all these have resulted in the ruination of our currency, the destruction of jute and jute manufactures and a complete loss of productivity.

It is in this backdrop that we have to view the predicament in which the Bangladesh economy finds itself today. This has been the result of deliberate destruction by the minions of expansionism within the government. The situation has been further aggravated by the rampant greed, incompetence and mishandling of the affairs of the nation by an essentially narcissistic leadership. As we said in the beginning, blunders and mismanagement can be corrected with acts of prudence. But the grand design must be defeated politically through a greater and possibly much more difficult struggle.

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The State of Law

Thus
fear or terror
of law and
the
lawmakers,
and that of
establishment
violence,
continue to
remain the
chief
weapons of
the rulers.

"The social system which condemns men, women and children to poverty at the same time pronounces upon them the sentence of the law that makes them convicts." So said Eugene V. Debs, the nineteenth century US reformer.

Even by this reformist definition, we are a nation of convicts. We suffer the hands of law which are the artifacts of repression. Yet it is invoked in the name of God, of justice and of equality. It is, we are told, the leveller of the high and the mighty and the redeemer of the wronged. That is what we have been taught in the primers of bourgeois social science.

Throughout the centuries, the criminal arbiters of the oppressive social systems have been making laws to protect themselves against the defiance of the masses. They have invented the status quo and built a hedge of legal instruments to defend their interests. They substitute the criminality of resistance with the criminality of repression. In the amphitheatre of their economic and political power, they decree death to the fallen gladiators and shriek over the spectacle of the gory drama.

Over time the sequence has changed and so have the characters on-stage. But as John Stuart Mill says: 'The masters of all other slaves rely, for maintaining obedience, on fear.' Thus fear or terror of law and the lawmakers, and that of establishment violence, continue to remain the chief weapons of the rulers. It is seldom used for redemption but mostly to force the people into submission.

The state of law and its dispensation in Bangladesh fit into a similar pattern, albeit with a difference. The difference is qualitative in so far as the thrust of the law is concerned. There are no holds barred-

not even conventional niceties. In the process, the ruling class has embarked upon a mechanism of a record number of bad or black laws which find few parallels excepting in a police-state.

Law and Judiciary: Law is open to judicial interpretations and has to be consistent with the universally accepted charter of human rights and such other rights as are guaranteed by the constitution in a given country. It is in this respect that the judiciary comes in and plays its part in the dispensation of law and arbitration of legal and constitutional disputes. The existence of the judiciary places some constraints on the executioners belonging to an oppressive social system; and oftener than not they come into conflict. This is notwithstanding the fact the judiciary too is an integral part of their own system and is as much meant for redemption as for the protection of the arbiters of the system. This contradiction is inherent in all societies, primitive or contemporary. But it is more pronounced in semi-colonies like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It is primarily because, in such social systems, the position of the ruling class and the necessary institutional framework designed by them are too fragile to withstand the massive pressure of popular will. The ruling classes in such countries are the lesser inheritors of an oppressive social system left behind by the colonial bourgeoisie and they are limited in their capacity to suppress. In other words, the capacity of the ruling classes in the semi-colonies are not commensurate with their perverted will and compulsion to repress.

The role of judiciary in the context of the countries mentioned above provide an interesting study of a constant battle between the executive and the judiciary. In Pakistan days too, the judiciary had been a gadfly to the ruling class and an indisposible irritant to the executive. This battle prompted the executive, which again is the servitor of the ruling class, to interfere with the process of justice and the institution of judiciary.

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It was a clear message that nothing was sacrosanct as long as conformity to executive actions and not the rule of law remained the hallmark of justice.

Political appointments and easing out of conscientious judges have not been very uncommon in Pakistan days—the episode of Justice Morshed being a case in point. The recent uproar in India over the appointment of the chief justice of the supreme court also bear out this aspect of this battle.

But every time such attempts failed to yield the desired dividends for the ruling class. The institution of judiciary somehow maintained its own righteousness and relative independence from an overbearing executive. Even Mr. Manzur Qadir, who was one of the architects of Ayub's military bureaucratic oligarchy and the designer of the basic democracies system, turned out to be an embarrassment for the government after he was inducted into the judiciary as the chief justice of the West Pakistan High Court.

Following the emergence of Bangladesh, the judiciary of the new nation suffered a major shake-up. The reconstitution of the benches and the act of retiring six judges were done in a manner which undermined the institution of judiciary and spoke of the highhandedness of the executive. It was a clear message that nothing was sacrosanct as long as conformity to executive actions and not the rule of law remained the hallmark of justice.

Governance by Anarchy: Ironically, this was done in the name of 'revolution' and patriotism as the new rulers tried to swamp the existent institutions of the government including the bureaucracy in a fit of perversion. It was the beginning of governance by anarchy and subjugation of the institutions of the government to the acquisitive economic and political instincts of a lumpen-bourgeoisie which rules over the nation today.

This big-stick policy worked for a while. The then presidential Order no. 50A took toll of 48,000 victims without their having any recourse to the process of justice. In a large number of such detentions without

precedent, the material greed of the expropriative ruling clan and personal or political feuds were the primary determinants of arrests rather than specific charges of collaboration and murder during those black days of 1971.

The denial of justice coupled with the atmosphere of terror prevailing in the new-born state tolled the knell of disaster for thousands of families. It seemed that Presidential Order no. 50A was a handy tool for settling scores by the dominant section of the ruling elite and for extortion and expropriation by the same set of people rather than bringing to justice the real collaborators according to the dictum of the law in the statute books with their right to defense against false implication. The people and the institutions of justice had to bear with it for days and months until a beginning was made by challenging a few cases of detention in the High Court division of the Supreme Court.

The first major legal breakthrough was not long in coming. The famous Mridha case before the High Court Division of the Supreme Court is an important landmark in this regard. That was the first time that the infamous Presidential Order No. 50 A could not be made justiciable before the court of law for the vagueness of the charges. The judgment on the Mridha case was followed by several other important judgments on writs of *habeas corpus* filed by petitioners who failed to get redress at any other level of magistracy or judiciary.

But what does this justiciability before the court of law really mean to an executive which is bent upon flouting all norms, conventions and sanctions of a legal system? Precious little, of course! And remember, it is the law of their own making and it is again the verdict of one of its own institutions. Furthermore, what can the judiciary do all alone to restrain the executive in its extra-legal or illegal proclivities? And how many of the thousands of prisoners rotting in the ghastly prisons of this 'free' country can afford to seek justice?

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The bar associations began to adopt resolutions against black laws like the P.O.50 A, P.O.9 and the subsequent enactment of Special Powers Act and Rakkhi Bahini Amendment Order.

The judiciary is after all an integral part of the social system and is open to the intimidatory practices of the ruling class. This is much more true at the lower echelons of judiciary where penal transfer is very common and over which the Presidential Order No. 9 hangs like Damocles's sword. On the other hand, until lately but for a handful of lawyers, few would dare to defend the detainees for fear of reprisal. Similarly, many victims either did not have the means or they failed to find a signatory to their petitions.

The End Of Inertia: The initial trepidations of the community of lawyers and that of the judiciary were soon over as protests against black laws and repression became louder and louder. The bar associations began to adopt resolutions against black laws like the P.O.50 A, P.O.9 and the subsequent enactment of Special Powers Act and Rakkhi Bahini Amendment Order.

The massive indignation over the government's repressive measures against political dissenters by enactments and actions also found its echo in the precincts of the law-courts. Some recent and very important judgments delivered by the High Court Division of the Supreme Court have brought into sharp focus the nakedness of governmental repression on the masses under the cover of Special Powers Act and the Rakkhi Bahini Amendment Order.

At the moment there are over 100 writ petitions pending before the High Court Division of the Supreme Court challenging not only the legality of detention under the Special Powers Act but also its vices. Altogether there are about 1,200 writ petitions waiting to be disposed of by the bench filed only this year.

The first full judgment delivered on a writ petition challenging detention under Special Powers Act has just been pronounced by Justice D.C. Bhattacharya and Justice A.R. Chowdhury in the Chanchal Sen case filed by his mother Mrs. Aruna Sen, wife of the well-known communist revolutionary Santi Sen. The case was

undertaken by the Committee for Civil Liberties and Legal Aid that was formed in Dhaka a few months back at a large gathering of lawyers, journalists, doctors, university teachers, writers, painters and other members of the intelligentsia.

The judgment in the Chanchal Sen case is a very elaborate one and it covers almost the entire history of habeas corpus in the sub-continuent. The judgment on this case may run into a hundred pages and it could not be obtained at the time of writing this report. The judges, while pronouncing their learned opinion on the case on September 16 and 17, took the view that the satisfaction of the government over the detention of a person would have to be based on objectivity and that the court had the jurisdiction and power to examine the materials with which the government might claim to have been satisfied in order to detain a person. In other words, the right to liberty cannot be taken away at the whim of the executive authorities.

Article 102 of the constitution of Bangladesh confers on the High Court Division of the Supreme Court the power and jurisdiction to direct the authorities to enforce any of the fundamental rights guaranteed by part III of the constitution. It also gives powers to the judges in all instances of *habeas corpus* to satisfy themselves that a person is not held without any lawful authority or in any unlawful manner.

In Chanchal Sen's case, the court has exercised this power and accordingly ordered his release after satisfying itself that the detention of Chanchal Sen was without any lawful authority.

Chanchal Sen has, however, not been released since.

Some Relevant Judgement: Earlier, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court delivered another judgment in the Shahjahan case wherein the conduct of the Rakkhi Bahini was found by the court to be most unsatisfactory. Shahjahan, the young boy who was

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They do not maintain any diary or register to record the arrest of any person or any of their activities relating to the maintenance of law and order.

allegedly killed by the Rakkhi Bahini, was ordered to be produced before the court. The Rakkhi Bahini failed to produce him and pleaded that he had escaped from their custody. The court went at length into the powers and functions of the Rakkhi Bahini and observed:

"The story of the discovery of arms on the showing of Shahjahan and his subsequent escape hardly inspires any sense of belief in the said story in view of the highly irregular manner in which the operations were conducted by the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini party and the complete absence of any dependable materials in support of operation have shown a complete disregard of the case."

The judges further observed:

"The facts which have emerged from the divergent statements made on behalf of the petitioner and the respondents have amply demonstrated the extremely unsatisfactory nature of working of certain army personnel, the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini and the normal law-enforcing organ of the state. The rights of the individual guaranteed under the constitution as well as the procedural laws of the country appear to have received little respect from the public servants in charge of the defence and the maintenance of law and order of the country."

The judges also expressed their surprise at the way the Rakkhi Bahini behaved. They said;

"The functions of the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini in connection with this case, to which our attention has been drawn, is also contrary to what is required under law. The absolutely unorthodox manner in which actions have been taken has surprised us".

It was further established in the course of the case that the Rakkhi Bahini is functioning without any rules of procedure or code of conduct. They do not maintain any diary or register to record the arrest of any person or any of their activities relating to the maintenance of law and order. The judges remarked:

"The Deputy Director (administration), Rakkhi Bahini, who has deposed in this court, when specifically asked about the rules under which they are to perform their various functions, stated that no rules have yet been formed under the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini Order, 1972 (President's Order No. 21 of 1972) under which the JRB has been constituted. On examination of the various provisions of the aforesaid Order, it appears to us extremely doubtful that the functioning of the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini, without any rules framed under the said Order, has the necessary legal foundation."

In the case of the detention of Mrs. Aruna Sen, mother of Chanchal Sen and the brutalities perpetrated on her and the two young girls Miss Rina Sinha, 19 and Miss Hanufa Begum, 15 by the Rakkhi Bahini, the Government was ordered to release all three of them unconditionally. It was only after newspaper reports on their arrest and torture by the Rakkhi Bahini (Holiday, February 17, 1974 and Ganakantho of the same date) that the government was obliged to disclose their whereabouts. It declared in a press note that they were detained because some hidden arms were found in their house. Had it been true, the government would not have released them.

In this case also, the court ordered the production of Mrs. Aruna Sen and the two other girls on the allegation that they were detained illegally and were tortured and assaulted by the Rakkhi Bahini for more than two weeks in the Rakkhi Bahini camp in Bhederganj under Madaripur Subdivision. The statements filed by Mrs. Aruna Sen, Miss Rina Sinha and Miss Hanufa Begum before the court read like a gruesome horror drama. Had there been no writ petition and no intervention by the court, nobody knows what would have been the fate of Mrs. Sen and the two young girls.

These are only a few instances where the High Court Division of the Supreme Court came to the relief of the victims whose recorded number today would be

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about 15,000 in different prisons of Bangladesh. On top of it, at least 20,000 more have been liquidated by the private armies of the ruling party and the paramilitary organisation of Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini.

The High Court Division of the Supreme Court has delivered some more judgments relating to personal liberty. Among those are the cases of Fazle Lohani of NAP (B), Mahfuz Bhuiyan, a well-known left revolutionary, Momtaz Begum of the JSD and Golam Kabir of NAP (requisitionist). Still now Major Jalil, president of the JSD, A.S.M. Abdur Rab, general secretary of the JSD and revolutionary leaders like Abdul Matin and Wahidur Rahman are passing their days in solitary confinement in a subhuman condition.

The ruling class in its immense perversion calls them miscreants. The vocabulary of political abuse, whether in the Parliament or within the protective cordons of law-enforcing agencies in public meetings, range from the vilest to what the previous repressive governments used to hurl at the democratic and left opposition. This only speaks of its lumpen character in all its manifestations.

Since the ruling class of Bangladesh is finding it difficult to hold the political prisoners due to the relief granted by the courts of law, it is resorting to executive excesses and other harassments. Thus Al-Mahmud, the poet-editor of Ganakantho, is languishing in the prison despite the granting of bail in two specific cases in the last week of June. Thus, notwithstanding the verdict on the imposition of Section 144 by the ruling party as illegal by the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, several opposition leaders and workers are still in custody. This is sadism at its worst.

A Look At The Laws: Let us have a look at the laws which the ruling party has enacted over the last two years. The making of the laws necessitated constitutional amendments as in the case of vesting emergency powers to the Prime Minister, and the Special

Powers Act, the latter being the epitome of all the black laws ever enacted by any regime in the sub-continent.

The ruling party amended article 33 of the Constitution to bring into existence the Special Powers Act. Article 33 of the constitution in its original form guaranteed the following:

(1) a person who is arrested shall not be detained in custody unless he has been informed of the grounds of his arrest nor shall he be denied the right to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice;

(2) every person who is arrested and detained in custody shall be brought before a court within 24 hours of his arrest (excluding the time required to transport him to the court) and shall not be further detained save by order of the court;

(3) nothing in the foregoing clauses shall apply to an enemy alien.

Following the amendment, the safeguards to arrest or detention have been taken away from persons who are arrested or detained under any law providing for preventive detention, that is, the Special Powers Act.

Commenting on the Special Powers Act, the Review, the journal of the International Commission of Jurists, said: "It is difficult to judge the necessity or otherwise of such legislations in present circumstances in Bangladesh. The Law Minister, in introducing the bill into the Parliament did not seek to conceal his distaste for the law, but argued that they were necessary...If Special Powers of this kind are necessary, it is regrettable that they were not passed by temporary legislation, which would then be subject to periodic review by the Parliament if its renewal is thought necessary. The provisions for review by an advisory board compare favourably with those in some other countries, but it is extraordinary that the right of legal representation should be denied. Also there seems to be a force in the complaint by some lawyers that the normal courts are being bypassed and their jurisdiction restricted more than

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is necessary. Finally, there is a most regrettable degree of restriction on press freedom."

Popular and considered legal opinion in Bangladesh has already condemned this law as ultra vires of the Constitution in so far as it is inconsistent with fundamental rights. Article 26 of the Bangladesh Constitution declares that laws inconsistent with fundamental rights are to be declared void.

And look at the irony! The Special Powers Act was further amended later providing for execution by firing squads of a certain category of offenders which include black-marketeers, saboteurs, hoarders currency smugglers and the like. And the proceedings of governmental actions will clearly prove the point that while the Special Powers Act has been ruthlessly used against the political opposition, the offenders who trade in human miseries and create famine in close collaboration with the political power have been allowed to go scot-free. Why? It is because this merchant class which has no connection with production forms the backbone of the ruling party. This is the class of new expropriators who are after limitless acquisition of wealth through the use of political power.

The most flagrant of all laws is the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini (amendment) Act. 1974. According to the basic provisions of this murderous act, anybody can be arrested by the Rakkhi Bahini at will and they would remain immune from any judicial supervision in all their activities in which they will be pleased to indulge in 'good faith.' In fact, the Rakkhi Bahini personnel have been empowered to kill, rape and arrest, all in good faith.

Hobbesian Jungle: Comparing Bangladesh with the Hobbesian Jungle, Badruddin Umar wrote in Holiday on February 3, 1974: But Bangladesh, as anticipated in the amendment order under discussion, is not going to be the only Hobbesian Jungle in the world today. Nor is it a new thing in the history of class exploitation. Cuba under Batista, Indonesia under

Suharto, Bolivia under Barrientos and his successors, East Pakistan under Yahya and Chile under Pinochet are some of the very recent examples of such jungles, where all the basic institutions of civilised society came to be wiped out in the course of the ruthless exploitation of the ferocious ruling classes.

In the face of such mounting repression, the court of judicature can hardly redeem the masses. Writ petitions and relief may help one in a thousand. "But the people who till the soil, who move the wheels of factory machines, the people who are engaged in production in various other ways and are exploited, suppressed and repressed by the present ruling classes—such people will not wait for a petition in any court of law. They will fight the law of the jungle in the way the fighting people of Chile, Bolivia, East Pakistan, Indonesia, Cuba fought and are still fighting."

The government brings up the excuse of secret murder or assassination of the Awami Leaguers by the political opposition and whom they describe as the extreme left. By now, it has been conclusively proved, but for few exceptions, that the majority of the victims of assassination belonging to the ruling party fell to the gunshots of their rivals within. The Dhaka University murder of seven thugs, the Pabna murder and the recent Rajshahi murder attempt all bear testimony to it. Too many thugs cannot coexist.

It is time that the ruling elite of Bangladesh does some introspection and self analysis rather than go wild over power which is very, very transient indeed. They must allow the rule of law to reign supreme, allow democratic movement and institutions to grow. The limit of endurance may not be stretched further. Or else as Frantz Fannon said, 'Violence, like Achilles' lance, will only heal the wound that it inflicts.'

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Where do the grants go?

What is important is the fate of this nation whose credibility and pride have become a casualty in the hands of its rulers.

The explanatory notes on the Prime Minister's recent visit to Washington via the United Nations headquarters have once again made us speechless in wonder. The many-splendoured build-up given to the whole works seems to have deflated like a popping balloon once the realities of diplomacy or the lack of it dawned on us in all its harshness. And before the sharp edges of relative disappointment with president Gerald Ford could be smoothed out by editorial embellishments, Finance Minister Tajuddin Ahmed chose to drop his bombshell to explode the myth that was.

The Finance Minister's extraordinary aptitude and precision-timing in stating the obvious is not the moot point of this article. Nor does his acknowledgment of our national disgrace in the world capitals make us any wiser than we are today. What is important is the fate of this nation whose credibility and pride have become a casualty in the hands of its rulers.

Such truths are unpalatable. It is more so when the palate of the nation has become over-saturated with the recipe of flattery and falsehood rather than a morsel of food. And food we have none or little, thanks to the management of the affairs of the state by our rulers whose sole preoccupation seems to be to defend and abet corruption and smuggling in their petty class interests rather than eradicate them.

Meanwhile, the death register becomes longer and longer with an average of 80 known deaths a day from starvation and concomitant diseases. Unofficial assessments put the figure at 10,000 in Rangpur district alone till now.

It is in this backdrop that we planned our laboured journey to Washington after a lot of suspense. The

expensive detour to the UN headquarters came in handy to justify the journey. If Ambassador Moynihan played his bit to obtain the invitation from the White House, he could not possibly ensure the rest. It was not expected either. But our media mistook the gesture for unlimited generosity that stopped just short of the dangling carrot of PL 480.

Thus the expectations born out of vigorous propaganda at home and what has now been admitted as low key diplomacy' across the seven seas are being replayed with half-hearted optimism to keep up morale. But when morale is at its breaking point, the irrelevance of linguistic nationalism and personal charms only adds to the injury of a hapless nation.

Not that our governmental tourism around the world including the United States has not produced any results. It did, though there is a lot of trepidation on the part of the donors and the creditors.

We have in the recent past received 62.5 million dollars from the International Monetary Fund as our special drawing rights against compensatory financing of export shortfall. In June 1974, another sum of 31.25 million dollars under SDR has been made available to Bangladesh against first credit tranche.

Furthermore, in September 1974 and October 1974, 12 million dollars and 28 million dollars respectively have been allocated to Bangladesh under SDR against oil facility. The International Development Agency gave us 50 million dollars in November 1972 under the first import credit programme; in February 1974, we received another sum of 50 million dollars under the second import credit programme and in October 1974, the same quantum under the third import credit programme. Japan gave us in March 1974, 31 million dollars worth of commodity loan.

The Soviet Union too has come up with 30 million roubles worth of commodity loan in recent weeks. Add to it, the commitments of foodgrains on

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The responsibility is total and collective. And our leadership must own it by going to the confessional stand.

account of flood amounting to 3 lakh tons and the latest food allocation of 1.5 lakh tons under PL 480 of the United States.

All these are over and above the humanitarian grant of two billion dollars worth of commodities given by the world though the United Nations Relief Operations for Bangladesh. You add it up and you have no excuse for a famine. And yet the famine is here and we are wont to use it for begging in and out of season from Moscow to Washington, from Tehran to Abu Dhabi.

It is time that the nation demanded an account of this massive assistance either in terms of money or commodities from our government. The licentious abuse of political and economic power by a handful of our power-elite has brought us to such a pass.

The responsibility is total and collective. And our leadership must own it by going to the confessional stand. The nation refuses to be duped any more by the hallowed martyrdom of self seeking leadership or the mock self-criticism among the partners in deception. This is their stock-in-trade. But how long, how long should we bear with it?

The foundations begin to totter?

Curiously enough, the ministers have just stopped talking. The newspapers are blissfully spared of their photogenic profiles, sermons and all for some weeks now. The anonymous crowd of the dead and the dying has for once pushed them out of focus. It appears that only Dr. Kamal Hussain has got something to talk about. And admittedly, he has not yet run out of his points of discourse.

The law of averages is, however, being worked out conversely as the quibblers in the ruling party have taken the field. They quibble in circles and often at a tangent to get the better of their adversaries. In between, the muffled declamations of a conscience-stricken Finance Minister make things worse confounded.

Conscience, they say, is the last resort of the guilty. It washes out all your sins as in the Christian rite of confession to the Father. But this also reflects the acute crisis of confidence among those who rule for better or worse.

The proceedings of the acrimonious infighting within the ruling party are, however, of a different nature. They remind me of the ribald French bedroom scene where each suitor philanders behind the back of the other. They cross their swords in a show of mock-duel which is amusing even in our endless miseries.

And as the drama progresses in the vein of the theatre of the farce with all its decadence, the government remains criminally inert in meeting its obligations to the famine-stricken populace.

There are two ways of looking at this present muddle within the ruling camp and the latest war of

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The country's bottom has been scraped of the last bits of resources by the ruling expropriators of different categories.

words between the Awami League President Mr. A.H.M. Quamruzzaman and Sheikh Fazlul Huq Moni, Chairman of the Presidium of the Awami Jubo League. It could be a more popular gimmick to confuse the people or else is the manifestation of final cracks before the power-structure of the ruling elite collapses under its own weight.

The quarrels within the ruling camp have a strange dynamics of their own. Each time such quarrels broke out in public, the victims were invariably the unwary campfollowers of dubious reputations. This is the age-old trick of political thuggery. The latter are expendable. Their criminality clouds the real issue and creates a smokescreen for the main actors in this deadly game.

The mass execution in Surya Sen Hall, the internecine killings in Bogra, Rajshahi, Pabna and Louhajang—to mention a few instances—bear out the truth of the above statement. While no one weeps over the victims, their own overlords shake hands after the bout is over. This is how the law of elimination takes its own toll as the fight over spoils continues to become more acute than ever.

This time, however, it is a different story. There is hardly any booty left for the plunder of our mini-liberators. The country's bottom has been scraped of the last bits of resources by the ruling expropriators of different categories.

A famine has been brought about and the flood of excuses has lost its credence. Now each one of them is feeling insecure about his own self and unearned possessions. Hence this exercise for fixing responsibilities on the other's shoulder.

There is a great deal of danger in overstressing or understressing this crisis within the ruling party on the part of the democratic and patriotic forces in Bangladesh. Because when disintegration begins to take place as an anti-thesis to licentious administration and

plunder, the forces of international reaction, namely, imperialism, social imperialism and expansionism will plunge into it to consolidate their economic, political and strategic designs. Fortunately for them, they have their own lobbies within the ruling party who are fronting for them in the statecraft of Bangladesh.

Like China of the 1920s, the Bangladesh government is a moth-eaten body with its divided loyalties to its different benefactors. Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is the prisoner of one or the other such lobbies at one point of time or another depending on their interactions and ascendancy in the state machine. And his predicament has become worse on account of the greed, incompetence and pettifoggery by some of his own people.

A situation of economic collapse, death and starvation, disaffection and administrative delinquency provide the most ideal setting for external forces to meddle. The contradictions in the ruling party must be viewed in this light and no amount of conscientious imposture by any of the valiants in the ruling coterie should go without scrutiny.

On the other hand, each move should be watched carefully in order that any crisis in government leading to a situation of civil war (which is a strong possibility) between one and another faction should not blur our vision as to the intrinsic character and motivation of the new martyrs.

If Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed or the nouveau-crusaders talk a lot about their own government after what they have done for themselves and done to the country in their characteristic manner, they are doing it for their own reasons and to serve their own masters. Possibly they will change their positions with the change in the wind. But can that save them or for that matter anyone in their shoes?

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Kissinger Visit and South Asian Politics Relevance of Tajuddin's fall

The Kissingeresque rhetorics have been long only on commendations and short on promises. But never mind. This is only a brief intermission and there is, lot more suspense in store.

It is now all quiet on the dissident front. The rumblings in the palace chamber where heads have started rolling are now out of hearing distance. Dr. Kissinger's spectacular blitz blew it all in a momentary flash that lasted as long as the entourage did. The Kissingeresque rhetorics have been long only on commendations and short on promises. But never mind. This is only a brief intermission and there is a lot more suspense in store.

Suspense or not, the whole business of power-crisis in Bangladesh falls into a familiar pattern about which we have written volumes in the vein of prognostication. It is also typical of countries like ours where the national political will is overridden by group or class interests of a handful of comprador elements propped up by external forces.

A disgraced Tajuddin or a rebellious Matiur Rahman does not alter the pattern nor indicate a change in the fundamentals of the problems. It merely underpins a heightening crisis born out of alienation and acute power struggle.

If it takes three years too long for the Prime Minister to act upon what has been described as the 'greater national interest' which may be seen as a surprise somersault, policy differences should hardly be the apple of discord. Because Mr. Tajuddin's dispensations as a senior minister in the cabinet are not apart from the government which is in charge of statecraft.

The political constraints which limit this nation's options continue to muzzle its aspirations. And as we decide to disinter the 'greater national interest' after it

has been buried, the new power-alignment in this region with sub-imperialist India as the epicentre has dedicated a fitting monument to our nation's grave. Dr. Kissinger has only done the job of a mason to erect the monument. (For an understanding of this hypothesis refer to the series in Holiday titled. 'The crises of Dependencies' in five parts by self.)

The illusion thus created over the ouster of Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed must not blur our perspectives of the issues at stake. The issues are; does it signal a substantive change in the posture or capability of the government in cutting our umbilical cord with the Indian overlords? And secondly, does a shift from Moscow to Washington or a tilt from one to the other materially alter the position of Bangladesh vis-a-vis the expansionist state of India? If we take note of the recent trend of power-alignments in South Asia the answer is emphatically no.

The desperate dash to Washington, the money-chase in the emirates and the diplomatic foray to Saudi Arabia are merely the firing exercises of a desperate and bankrupt government which represent the worst kind of lumpen bourgeoisie.

In fact, it has no relevance or consequential bearing on the freedom of political will or the lack of it on the part of our rulers. Contrarily, the will shall continue to be eroded as we bid more and more at history's most degrading alms-race as the topmost entrant from any part of the globe.

The tragedy is that the givers of alms are more generous with their compliments than with their pocketful of surplus. Since courtesy costs nothing, we have had a new commendation from Dr. Kissinger for our nation and the Prime Minister but not much of what our leadership desperately begged of him. The same goes for the Russians too. Encomiums unlimited have far outpaced the assistance which the government thought it would get.

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With the changing power-alignment in the subcontinent, Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed's position with the Americans improved as well. In fact, there has been a discernible tilt in Mr. Ahmed's conduct with the once-hated Americans.

There are two reasons for this. First, the economic and political laissez faire by the power elite over the last three years and the calculated destruction of the productive forces have thrown the viability of this government open to question. And secondly, the new power-alignment centering on the sub-regional power of India has left the economic dependencies like Bangladesh completely high and dry.

Dr. Kissinger's hop around the three capitals of the sub-continent is simply to give the final touches to this obvious alignment in which India shall play the pivotal and decisive role over the lesser sharers in the truncated landmass called the sub-continent.

The cooling off of the Russians and the noisy entry of the Americans in so far as Bangladesh is concerned must be looked at from this standpoint. Because both are unreal. It will be wrong to assume that the Soviet Union has conceded victory to its world-rival the United States.

What is fact is that the so-called Indo-Soviet axis has finally been enlarged into a new Indo-Soviet-American axis. This will last as long as the so-called detente between the two contending and colluding superpowers lasts in this part of the world.

Thus with the passage of time and a concurrent change in the power-alignment, Bangladesh has gone further back on its cherished freedom. And there is no reason to assume that the recent changes will materially alter our position vis-a-vis Indian expansionists.

In point of fact, its grip shall be stronger than ever notwithstanding the ouster of their protege Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed or the Sheikh's own contradictions with India itself. Viewed thus, the ouster of Mr. Ahmed is more a result of a power struggle than of any policy difference. With the changing power-alignment in the subcontinent, Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed's position with the Americans improved as well. In fact, there has been a discernible tilt in Mr. Ahmed's conduct with the once-hated Americans.

He has also been rubbing his shoulders with the votaries of the Western economic institutions with the ease and grace of a man of consequence. And for all I know, he was serious about his bid for power in Bangladesh. Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, however, struck preemptively to foil the bid at an opportune moment.

Mr Ahmed's relative position is certainly weaker. First, he is much smaller in stature in relation to the Prime Minister both nationally and internationally. And secondly, he is identified with Indian expansionist interest against which sentiments have reached an all time high.

But his handicap may be equally offset by the prevailing objective conditions and mass hunger and death. A further worsening of the economic and food situation, which seems only logical, shall give him the necessary scope to strike back. And it is only expected that being in the game for so long a time, he is going to play his cards rather well.

The other incidental advantage will be the growing strength of the opposition and the bitter infighting within the ruling party. The dissenters and those who have fallen from grace will seek to overcome this political handicap by an exposure of the character of the government, corruption, expropriation and plunder. It is not for nothing that ex-minister Matiur Rahman took courage to launch the first ever tirade against his erstwhile colleagues and demanded an account of their wealth and properties.

The statement and counter-statement between JSL's Abdul Mannan M.P. and Mr. Matiur Rahman provide an interesting case of mutual exposure, and the coming week may witness a spate of such scandalous outpourings against each other and physical conflicts. Such a situation has never been uncommon in the recent history of the Awami League. But so long it was practiced for consolidating one's position against the other and competing for the Prime Minister's favour. But now it is

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going to graduate into a bitter and possibly an ominous struggle between two personalities, the lesser one being obviously Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed. It is also not unlikely that in the process the PM's image may also get smeared once the rupture takes place.

The rupture is final. The coming parliamentary party meeting and the Parliament session may turn into a battleground for the finale. With Mr. Ahmed still in the party and some support on his side, it will be difficult to get an easy sailing in the Parliament if the projected amendment for switching over to a presidential system is brought in.

This warrants Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed's expulsion from the Awami League which, as it is today, is not as easy as it seems to his opponents in the ruling party. An attempt at expelling Mr. Ahmed is sure to bring about a breach in the ruling party and may also spark off widespread trouble in the ranks of the government party followers and beneficiaries.

Fortunately for Mr. Ahmed, he does not have to take any initiative. He has got to react only.

In view of the above possibilities, the fate of the Parliament and the projected session hangs in the balance. Either the present status quo will be maintained by a deferment of the Parliament session and the breach in the party. Or else the Parliament has to be disbanded by the invocation of emergency powers or worst still, by downright abrogation.

Split in Pro-Soviet Ranks

The democratic centralism of the pro-Moscow CPB, NAP (M) and their student wing, the Bangladesh Chhatra Union, is on the rocks. Sparked off by prominent NAP (M) leader Captain Abdul Halim Chowdhury's open dissent over programmes and policies and the strategy of shameless collaboration with the ruling junta in company with the CPB, the rebellion has caught on with the younger cadres in the party, particularly the student wing.

As is already known, five leading BCU cadres including two national committee members have already given a call in a statement issued on November 2 in Dhaka to 'forge a mighty mass movement against the bankrupt ruling class' and 'expose the socialist pretensions of the Awami League and their collaborators, namely the Moni-Muzaffar entente.'

The dissident BCU leaders characterised the ruling Awami League as 'the servitor of international monopoly capital including that of India.' They held that the anti-national activities of the ruling class and its collaborators have brought about the worst crises in our national life that culminated in the deadly famine. They alleged that the conspiracy to destroy this nation's economy, industry, productive forces and agriculture at the behest of 'imperialism and expansionism' was still on.

The statement is not the usual sort that often marks leadership crises in parties or organisations like the NAP (M) or the BCU. It does not also reflect a mere option for movement against the ruling class while the fundamental political position on national and international issues remain unchanged.

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Contrarily, it highlights the BCU leaders' complete disagreement over the CPB-NAP(M) thesis on national and international contradictions. And to that extent, this fissure marks an important development in the sphere of progressive democratic struggle for the attainment of national democratic revolution.

The crisis within the fold of this iron-compact of the CPB-NAP (M)-BCU has been simmering for quite sometime now. But the differences were mostly on the strategy and tactic of the party leadership in so far as its collaboration with the ruling Awami League is concerned and the rejection of any need for political movement against the government in order not to upset the apple-cart of non-capitalist development under the 'socialist leadership of the ruling Awami League.'

It is on this question of the degree of collaboration that some NAP (M) leaders like Mr. Altaf Hussain of Kushtia or the once fire-eating Motia Chowdhury disagreed. They maintain that 'non-capitalist development' as a stepping stone towards peaceful transition to socialist transformation cannot succeed with a 'capitalist superstructure' at the level of political government and administration.

On top of that, the absence of an independent political strategy on the obvious issues of corruption, economic deprivation of the people, smuggling, price rise and political repression created a crisis of identity for a mass party like the NAP(M) and CPB's student front, the BCU.

Hence, the disagreement of some of the NAP members was primarily on the tactical question and their dislike of the sour-faced Professor Muzaffar Ahmed. The difference on such tactical questions also led to defections of a different order: The present first vice president of the Awami League Mr. Mohiuddin

Ahmed chose to opt for the ruling party. For him it was better to be in the fore of the bandwagon than in the tail.

What Mr. Mohiuddin did in his enlightened self-interest and by a simple switch of loyalty could not be emulated by the rest of the dissenters who fall in the above category. The importance of their political line allowed little scope for even a limited opposition to the ruling establishment. For the Awami League, it made little difference. As the wedding bell rings for the Gono Oikyo Jote in the name of God and socialism, the lesser partners in the union were only left with the option of wagging the tail.

The Soviet Union at whose insistence this nuptial bond came about and which holds the purse strings for the parties under discussion had little tears to shed for them. Thus between Professor Muzzaffar Ahmed and his detractors within the party like Mrs. Motia Chowdhury, Sayed Altaf Hussain and Suranjit Sen, the NAP (M) was reduced to a 'socialist club' housed in a requisitioned building on the Topkhana Road.

The tragedy of NAP (M), CPB and its student front, the BCU, is the tragedy of its politics. And whatever the differences between its factions, those have no relevance to the broad democratic struggle unless they renounce the fundamentals. If they attempted to delude the gullible cadres through corruptive practices and the dope of internationalism, it did not work for long.

The committed and younger cadres began to see through the gimmicks of international conferences, the bait of scholarships and the colourful joints in the various embassies of those who go by the name of socialist countries. If such are the prizes of obedience, they could as well join the ranks of the Chhatra League or the Jubo League. So many of them

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did as Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed since here what is good for the goose is good for the gander as well.

But the recent cracks within the Moscow-leaning parties have a different dimension altogether. It is the patriotic rebellion of the youth and other cadres and leaders against the plunder, sell-out and anti-national activities of the ruling class.

They refuse to be duped anymore by the renegades who had gone by the name of Communists once upon a time and are presently colluding with the comparador bourgeoisie of the worst variety to unleash killer repression on the democratic and revolutionary forces in the country.

The rebellion within the folds of the CPB-NAP (M)-BCU compact has occurred at a time that augurs well for the coming struggle. Already there are positive developments in respect of opposition unity in the mass front and closer understanding on strategy and tactics between the different revolutionary parties. The massive unity is bound to come about and on this platform shall unite the whole gamut of patriotic classes and forces including those in the ruling party. The fight has begun and the ranks of the oppressed are swelling.

The Crisis and the PM's Options

Just what Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will make of his government is no longer a matter of conjecture for political observers, but one of compulsion for him. There are several options open to him for working out a new political arrangement in order that he may run the country as he pleases with or without the necessary mandate.

But one thing is certain. Other things remaining constant, any structural or constitutional rearrangement is not going to bring about a qualitative change in the character and dispensation of the government which has come to be regarded as the most corrupt, inefficient and politically retrograde establishment of recent times. And secondly, it shall also entail cession of absolute power in terms of delegation and distribution—an idea which may not appeal to the Prime Minister's exclusive sense of possession.

Before we examine the options and the implications thereof, we should make an attempt at understanding the nature of the governmental crisis in Bangladesh in plain political terms. An a priori reasoning will no doubt relate the crisis to the constraints the government suffers on account of its birth-process.

But notwithstanding that original sin, an empirical study will clearly reveal that the crisis which has reached a dead-end is primarily the outcome of a malignant case of governmental malfunctioning. It is not certainly a manifestation of political instability that often plagues the political processes of a developing nation and thereby creates the necessary socio-political tensions in a given situation. The latter was true of Pakistan and as such needs to be noted here.

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If the Parliament turned into an assembly of mutes or a platform of abuses and lies, it must have caused a lot of pain to those who fought for the Parliament's sovereignty over the years.

The constitutional crisis which bedevilled the politics of Pakistan can be attributed to political instability, inter-regional and inter-group tensions. The tensions grew out of the compulsion of the bourgeois-feudal power-elite in Pakistan to hold on to substantive political and economic authority, the denial of constitutional, economic and regional rights to the mass of the people and the oppressed nationalities and the resultant political ferment in different parts of the then Pakistan, particularly East Pakistan now Bangladesh.

The denial of parliamentary democracy to the people by the Pakistani ruling class, which finally chose to rule through a military bureaucratic oligarchy, can also be attributed to the fact that even in a bourgeois parliamentary democracy, political power would have of necessity swung to the majority population.

Hence, the Pakistani ruling class had to bring about the presidential system wherein it sought to reduce the tensions by making concessions to the extent that they did not threaten the status quo in the state-power. It had another plea to do so. The political institutions of the Pakistan days were not commensurate with the sustenance of a Westminster type model.

But the situation here is different. The obsolescence of the present political arrangement is not due to the inherent weaknesses of the political institutions; it is because of the anti-democratic working of the dominant section of the ruling class and the systematic denigration of the Parliament and the political party through open infringements upon their sovereignty and political rights.

If the Parliament turned into an assembly of mutes or a platform of abuses and lies, it must have caused a lot of pain to those who fought for the Parliament's sovereignty over the years. But they did not have the courage to shed tears. The erosion the Parliament's sovereignty was total when the Constitution (second) Amendment Act, 1973 drove the last nail into

the coffin of a 'rubber-stamp Parliament'. (Refer to The Political Significance of the Emergency Provisions' by Badruddin Umar in Holiday, September 23, 1973).

The same holds true of the Awami League which is now reduced to what Badruddin Umar described in this paper on April 14, 1973 as 'the Anti-State Awami League'. The article said: "The Awami League organisation at present represents that class of people who are enriching themselves through a process which is retarding production and because of this, it is fast turning into an anti-state entity. A situation will finally arise when the contradiction between the two will become quite irreconcilable, and this state in order to preserve itself will have to make an attack on the Awami League as a ruling political organisation."

It now seems that the moment has arrived when the Awami League as a political institution has lost its utility as the power-base of the political government. Even the Awami Jubo League whose credentials are much more dubious than some of the worst elements in the Awami League is accusing them of being enemies of the state and the nation. This is amusing but nevertheless a truism.

On the other hand, the institutions of the government are also well-poised to retaliate since the Awami League, the Chhatra League, the Jubo League and the Sramik League have turned into an antithesis of administration in the spheres of law and order, production, education, culture, distribution, procurement and the running of statecraft.

How could this come about? Is it simply because of the lumpen character of the ruling party or is the political organisation called the Awami League a victim of the worst kind of tribal politics? As one of the most vocal detractors of the ruling party, I would take the latter as a more plausible reason. The Awami League as a political party has gone to smithereens primarily because of the style of politics at the leadership level.

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In this style, factions are openly encouraged through well-calculated patronage and strategy. And among all the factions. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by virtue of his charisma emerges as the single largest faction within the Awami League. In this factional fight, the Sheikh as a faction has definite advantages over all others including his nephew Sheikh Fazlul Huq Moni or his party president Mr. A.H.M. Quamruzzaman. Because in his denunciation of the party or the factions, he, like the drone in the fairy tale, holds the life-line for both the party and the factions.

It will be interesting to relate back to our reactions on the decision of Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to relinquish the presidentship of the Bangladesh Government and accept the post of the Prime Minister.

K.G. Mustafa, journalist-ambassador, writing in Holiday on January 16, 1972 said: "The decision of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to relinquish the presidentship and accept the post of the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh can be described as a landmark in the brief but spectacular history of constitutional development in this region. It marks the ushering in of real parliamentary democracy which was never given a fair trial by the leaders who founded Pakistan in 1974. In a month's time, the centre of gravity of state power shifted from the office of President to that of the Prime Minister The significance of this change-over lies in the fact that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman subjects himself to the scrutiny of the Parliament and through Parliament to the people."

But it turned out to be wishful thinking. The reason lies not in the inherent weakness of the party and the Parliament or for that matter of the political institutions but in the debilitation of the same by either voluntary or involuntary infringements upon what I earlier described as the sovereignty of the political institutions. Here is a situation where power is concentrated in one single office whereas the dispensation of power is

disrupted on account of the inadequacy of the mechanism and the complete lack of sovereignty of the political institutions.

Hence it is clear that the crisis of governance in Bangladesh is neither one of political instability (since no one is threatening seizure of power), nor is it in the nature of political or constitutional crisis set off by inter-regional or inter-group tensions.

It is simply a crisis of governance. The discharge of power and obligations comes up against an institutional malfunctioning which in turn is the result of too much centralisation and consequent debilitation of the institutions concerned—both political and administrative.

Similarly, it can also be argued that this unorthodox working of the dominant section of the power-elite, which itself is now in peril, has also completely blocked the avenues of constitutional opposition in this country.

If Sheikh Fazlul Huq Moni has a lot of good words to say about the opposition leaders now, it does not bring back the confidence of the democratic opposition. Some may fall for this politics of intrigue and compromise; but others won't.

Consequently, the Prime Minister today is faced with a crisis in which everything seems unworkable. A Presidential form—which is difficult to carry through even in his own Parliament—or a national government which again seems unlikely under the circumstances despite emissaries shuttling between the Ganabhaban and the opposition leaders, could only be an ad hoc arrangement for running the state.

And in both cases, his absolute power is going to be curbed. But that is none of our problem. The issue is whether for his voluntary or involuntary mistakes, the nation and the democratic political institutions of the country should pay.

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The option would be to quit the government and become the president of his own party, purify the organisation and give it a positive direction and programme.

The Prime Minister lost a most opportune moment in April, 1974. He called in the army to destroy his own political party. Because, the army thrust would have invariably come up against his own partymen, whether it is a case of smuggling, hoarding or possession of illegal arms or properties. The political decision would have been to clear the mess, give a mid-term election some time in 1975 and restore the political institutions once again. But that was not done.

He gave in to the petty pressures of some elements in the Awami League, the Awami Jubo League, the Chhatra League and halted the army operations only to save them. The result is known to all and sundry. If some MP's or so-called Awami student or youth leaders got a beating, some young army officers had to pay for it with their hard-earned and well-fought jobs. This is where the crisis of confidence completely collapses.

The present situation warrants a change. But the change must not be at the cost of political institutions. After all in politics, power is institutional and not individual. It will be impolitical to assume that power rests with him alone. His power-base has so long been the parliamentary political institutions.

If the political institutions have become obsolete for the reasons mentioned above, the only political decision is to revamp and recreate the institutions in their full glory, that is by ushering in democratic politics in the country, releasing political prisoners, annulling the black laws and ending corruption and political patronage into the Awami League.

As a good nationalist and a democrat, he must realise this. The option would be to quit the government and become the president of his own party, purify the organisation and give it a positive direction and programme. In that event he loses nothing. Or else he loses both power and glory.

Properties: Abandoned and Otherwise

Everytime the Parliament meets, its preoccupation boils down to hurried legislation of bad laws, laboured humour, ritual of walk-outs, some questions and not enough answers. The topic of abandoned properties, both movable and immovable, however, comes up with monotonous regularity. Like bad laws and worse parliamentary practices, the answers are swallowed with a sense of resignation and some whimpers from the non-believers.

While it is pointless to discuss the Parliament and the new amendment to the Printing Presses and Publications Act, it may be worthwhile to go into the concept of abandoned properties. For one thing, abandoned property is a category which is very much unique to Bangladesh.

An abandoned property, to venture a definition, is a form of property which is not particularised by way of definite ownership by one or the other. It is a category which is neither owned nor disowned in the manner of a house or a factory. The possessors of the abandoned properties are neither propertied in the conventional sense of the term nor are they the agents of the state in administering those estates—industrial or otherwise. They are the blessed middlemen, halfway between a tenant and an owner. Nevertheless, they are accountable neither to the state nor to a private individual. In one word, they are the new breed of property-grabbers which only the Awami League and their allies in the CPB and NAP (M) can produce.

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Pakistanis in Bangladesh. Some sectors of the industries were brought under state control by Presidential Ordinances and later by Acts of the Parliament. These include jute, textiles, shipping and other sectors besides a number of other establishments valued at over fifteen lakhs. The rest that accounted for a sizeable number of small and medium establishments ranged from small and medium factories, commercial houses, indenting firms, residential quarters, cars and the luxury inventories of affluent households.

We know what has happened to the big ones. But whatever has happened to the rest of this large booty of abandoned properties and things? Frankly, they have been converted into the unearned possessions of the new breed of property-grabbers whose socialist imposture cannot cover their petty personal greed.

To talk a little more precisely, the abandoned properties which are the legacies of a communal past (in the Pakistan period Hindu properties were expropriated in the name of Islam) are the springboards for personal accumulation. The context has changed. Now we do it in the name of socialism. By the government's own admission, only 5,000 out of 20,000 abandoned houses (the figure should be much higher) have been recovered from illegal possession. Only 139 out of innumerable small and medium industries have been returned to the owners or disinvested.

How was it done has not been stated nor is it known what is the state of the other abandoned properties or who occupies them. A sample study of the shoppes and establishments in Baitul Mukarram or other mercantile areas like Motijheel, Chowkbazar, New Market, or for that matter of the small and medium industries in Tejgaon, Narayanganj, Khulna, Bogra and Chittagong or worse still, the residential houses, cars and inventories in Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Banani in Dhaka and other places will reveal the nature, character and the political relevance of expropriation in Bangladesh.

All the occupants, whether legal or extra-legal, are the new breed of property-grabbers belonging to the Awami League, and its collaborators. The expropriation has been so naked that they are even depriving the state of the revenue or the value of the abandoned properties. It is strange and unprecedented. They are even multiplying their unearned possessions through open state patronage.

If this be the situation, the theoretical question naturally arises as to the claim of the Awami League government that it has made an attack on private property in order to lead the country to socialism. When a socialist state makes an attack on private property, it means the abolition of private property as an institution.

In Bangladesh, however, the mechanism of transfer of ownership from the previous owners to the new breed of property-grabbers is plainly unorthodox. Because of their deprivation, the ruling group also made an attack on the old propertied class and ventured to create a new propertied class on the basis of tribal principles.

Once they have got hold of properties, they are prepared to throw socialism out the window. If 5000 illegal occupants were evicted from houses or shops and factories, that was because their expropriation was too blatant. It is better to legalise expropriation than leave it at that. Does not the same psychology apply in all other spheres? It does. And that is why Bangladesh still remains an expropriator's paradise.

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More on John the Merchant

Mr. John Stonehouse had become a household name in Bangladesh owing to his active involvement in the Bangladesh struggle in the UK during 1971.

The mysterious disappearance of Mr. John Stonehouse, a sitting British Labour MP and a trustee of the now-defunct Bangladesh Fund in the UK, has touched off a spate of speculations about his fate and some scandals concerning the fund and his business records.

It is somewhat unsavoury to rake up the scandals, real or otherwise, at a moment when the fate of Mr. Stonehouse is still uncertain. But in view of the seriousness of the charges levelled against him in the UK concerning the Bangladesh Fund and his business empire, the questions need to be looked into in all their aspects. The Federal Bureau of Investigation of the United States is already working on his disappearance from Miami Beach where he had been on a business trip, Scotland Yard is on the move and the British newspapers are busy investigating the episode.

Mr. John Stonehouse had become a household name in Bangladesh owing to his active involvement in the Bangladesh struggle in the UK during 1971. But unlike his other compatriots, like Donald Chessworth, he instantly became a controversial figure in both Bangladesh and the U.K. on account of his business involvements in independent Bangladesh though such outfits as the Bangladesh Imex and the Global Imex and the formation of the British Bangladesh Trust Ltd., now renamed as London Capital Securities.

By a strange coincidence, it was Holiday which hurled the first salvo at Mr. John Stonehouse in its June 11 issue of 1972. The brief article entitled 'John the Merchant' took exception to one of Mr. Stonehouse's remarks on press freedom at a Dhaka reception.

The article said: "When the Rt. Hon'ble John Stonehouse told a reception in Dhaka last week that press freedom was being abused here, he was obviously talking preemptively lest the abuse of the printed word spoil the

broth of an excellent business proposition called Bangladesh. Already the knowledgeable sceptics are looking askance at his frequent ceremonious visits to this virgin land and are getting wary of his patronising shoptalk that ranges from precious advice to the inept administration to a generous dosage of moral-boosters in political, quasi-political and social receptions. Thanks to his genius for friendly persuasion and his politico-business acumen, the British mercantile capital and its sub-continental collaborationists never had it so good since the winding up to the East India Company.

And in this fantastically suave operation of a vast magnitude, the erstwhile crusader for the cause of Bangladesh has drawn a sprinkling of talents from all walks of life—politics, business and bureaucracy—who seem to matter in this open country teeming with fresh exploits."

It is most likely that Mr. John Stonehouse would have gone unscathed had he not stepped on the toes of a muted press. His unfortunate remarks on press freedom at a time when Holiday was just about the only opposition voice in the country in the early days of our independence brought him under fire from us.

After all, who cares about gold-diggers one too many; and by God, the whole country was in the hands of people who were bent upon converting their so-called martyrdom into material profits and that too at the expense of the people and the country.

Mr. Stonehouse was like any other commercial traveller who was making good his investments. There was not a single sector of business where his ghost wasn't seen, be it cotton yarn from Brazil, trucks from India, chartered aircraft from London, buoys for the IWTA, printing of currency notes for the Bangladesh Bank, reorganisation of the jute trade and an endless list of commodities which Bangladesh traded for its own consumption and use. It was after the Holiday article was published that the British press took note of Mr John Stonehouse who had by then organised the British Bangladesh Trust Ltd. A story in the Sunday Times by Anthony Mascarenhas (author of 'The Rape of Bangladesh') caused the first stir in the United Kingdom. It was around

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that time that I had the opportunity to meet him and Mrs. Barbara Stonehouse in London at a private dinner. It was a nice, pleasant meeting since neither of us talked about the article.

But the point is how could he go about his business in Bangladesh. I still distinctly remember a photostat copy of a letter from the Finance Ministry sent to me by a source in which Mr. Stonehouse was authorised to deal with Bangladesh business abroad. If the article in *Holiday* in June 1972 caused him to keep a low profile in terms of ostentatious office and personnel, the very authorisation allowed him to dabble in each and every business deal covered under foreign trade or tied loans. That only proves that he had a set of collaborators in Bangladesh to front for him and his fabulous empire, which he built only over the last half a decade.

The allegations concerning the Bangladesh Fund may or may not be the important issue. After all, the British Government and the press will be unsparing in digging up the facts. But what is surprising is the complete nonchalance of the Bangladesh Government with regard to the institution of an investigation of the issue of the Fund and local business deals. Is it because many of the 'patriotic' stringers for Mr. John Stonehouse will be exposed?

The furore over the disappearance of Mr. Stonehouse may not die as easily as some would believe. His disappearance, whether fatal or faked, caused the withdrawal of his business colleagues, four of whom, including one of his Bengali directors Mr. K.B Ahmed, have reportedly resigned. That is as much intriguing as the allegation being brought to light by Reverend Michael Scott of the Minority Groups Council. Incidentally, Reverend Scott's involvement with minor independence movements has not endeared him to many governments including that of India. But that is beside the point.

It now seems that *Holiday's* prognostications in 1972 came true not too late. Bangladesh as a business proposition still remains an attractive pasture for many. Mr. Stonehouse was the guiding light. To him politics is an investment for profits: and the profits—by God—are plenty.

Indian pressure mounts

Mr. Y.B. Chavan, who swapped his defence portfolio for that of foreign affairs in recent times, must have gone back home from Bangladesh a wiser man. The euphemism of a joint communique and the tribute to the Prime Minister notwithstanding, Mr. Chavan's familiarisation trip was unfortunately fraught with some knotty problems. And they wouldn't come unstuck despite claims to the contrary.

The Indian Foreign Minister's visit was compounded by a new element that was stirred by India itself. It was not simply the good old Farakka issue, now admitted as a problem, nor was it the chimera of 'smuggling by consent' to the detriment of legal trade between the two countries.

The new featherweight that has been added to the existing ones is the question of territorial waters. By all indications, it may turn out to be as vexatious as the Farakka problem. Incidentally, while the latter has been raised by Bangladesh, the embryonic dispute on territorial waters is an Indian delusion per se.

It may, however, be sweeping to call it a delusion since the question of territorial waters is intertwined with the spectre of the US multinational corporations. But that is another story and outside the purview of this discussion. (For an understanding of the issue as we see it, please refer to 'Oil agreement and Multi-National Corporations' by self and Bhaskar Sen in Holiday dated September 29, 1974.)

What is important here is the significant shift in the respective positions of India and Bangladesh. So long India was at the receiving end of complaints and entreaties from a whining complainant who wouldn't dare to make it a public issue. If it had begun

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with the arms and the dues which were transported clean along with the prisoners of war or some naval or merchant ships captured in 1971, to mention a few, it had been mostly done on the sly and most respectfully so to say. Only the Farakka question eluded the beat, perhaps with the heavy tread of defiance that hardly goes with the gait of a frail-looking former Minister for Water and Power, Khondker Mushtaque Ahmed.

To many it was surely not a becoming posture of a Minister and a government whose life-line is being held by the fairy-tale drone in Delhi. He paid with a sack for better or worse. But the problem remained as defiant as the threat of the commissioning of the Farakka Barrage by India by the year-end.

It is now an open secret that the positions taken by the two governments on this issue and the probable alternatives have come to be regarded as mutually exclusive. The twain have been meeting with monotonous regularity with adjournments unlimited. And as things drift, we await for the magic of a political solution to be produced out of the hats of the two Prime Ministers.

A solution is necessary; but it is naive to think that a problem can be resolved by default or desire. The drag of the Joint Rivers Commission continues to bedevil the issue. Alternatives too have narrowed to the extent of near-irreconcilability.

Mr. Chavan must have talked Farakka over at the appropriate levels. The talks may have been cursory since the whole issue is in a state of suspended animation. As is known to the local press, Mr. Chavan called on the Minister for Water at his residence and consigned the issue for its solution to the two Prime Ministers. While the national press had very little inkling about what had transpired, the Indian press was granted the exclusive privilege to tell their own story on the basis of this courtesy exchange.

Mr. Chavan's lack of immediate concern about Farakka and the sharing of waters of the common rivers was for different reasons. He was and is politically sure of the superior bargaining strength of India as the suzerain power and was jolly well counting his chickens on Bangladesh Prime Minister's verbal assurance of adjustment on the apportionment of the flow during his May visit to Delhi.

The prospects of a political solution are becoming more and more elusive. As yet the prospective meeting between the two Prime Ministers could not be scheduled. Did Mr. Chavan talk about the time and venue of the meeting? It does not seem likely. And meanwhile, the positions on two sides, as are evidenced from the JRC meetings, have been stiffened further.

If at the expert level Bangladesh has suggested the initiation of a third agency in solving the totality of the problem of sharing waters from the common rivers (there are forty-two of them), politically she is rather hesitant to press the point too far.

India has been consistently refusing to involve a third agency, in this business as she had to do in the case of six northern rivers during her dispute with Pakistan.

She on the other hand, is also ignoring the Bangladesh plea that an augmentation of the storage capacity which India already possesses and is going to possess when about 19 projects near Nepal are completed, would negate the necessity to divert 6.3 maf of water flow for West Bengal during the four months of the lean period. In other words, India can operate the barrages in such a manner that the quantum of water in excess of the normal flow can be profitably channelled to West Bengal without having to draw on the lean-period flow of the Ganges to the serious detriment of Bangladesh.

The Indian obstinacy seems almost pathological as both the alternatives are workable. The induction of

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a third agency for which the World Bank and the UNDP are expected to agree on approach, can bring about a permanent solution to the sharing of waters and the control of floods.

Farakka can meanwhile serve as an useful bridge between the west and south of West Bengal rather than turn into a nightmare for Bangladesh. Or else, the storage dams which are up the sleeves of India can be so used as to augment the reserve and divert the required 6.3 million acre feet of water flow for the Indian state of West Bengal.

Frankly, Farakka is not insoluble. But a solution is eluding the two friendly neighbours for totally different reasons. In India's estimation, the standpoint of the Bangladesh Government is the measure of its intransigence—an intransigence which is not to the taste of the overbearing expansionist state of India.

It may be noted here that Bangladesh's complaints and entreaties pertaining to issues which are not substantive have been granted with a show of generosity by India on a few occasions. The return of a fraction of the unlimited arms and military equipment and the captured merchant ships are cases in point.

With a muted defence and a limping merchant navy, such gestures do not really alter the relative position—politically, economically and militarily. And in both the instances the intervention of the political leadership in Delhi added an element of drama as in the grand finale of a comedy that draws a thousand claps.

It is against this psycho-political background that one has to adjudge the Indian position on Farakka and the first-ever open disputation of rights over territorial waters. The Government of India knows for sure that the Bangladesh government is bound by a thousand threads to Delhi. But the inherent character of the bourgeois-feudal expansionist state of India gets the better of its feigned modesty whenever there are signs of the slightest shift in the captive, that, is Bangladesh.

It is interesting to note that consequent upon the new power-alignment centering on the subcontinent, India is least bothered about the so-called westward swing of the Bangladesh government. Henry Kissinger's acceptance of India as a major power has buried the hatchet. In the changed geo-political context in the subcontinent, India has become the epi-centre for the superpowers. Hence, a swing either way by such dependencies as Bangladesh cannot and shall not be materially harmful to the suzerain authority of the subcontinental giant.

But, as in the past, Bangladesh's overt and covert moves to win the Chinese confidence and friendship and its forays into the Arab world have not been taken kindly by Delhi. The axe of Farakka and the stout protest over territorial waters are the necessary 'friendly' pressures brought to bear upon the Government of Bangladesh. If the message of Sikkim was nakedly loud, it is now being followed up by more subtle and yet effective messages.

Prior to Mr. Chavan's visit, India reportedly lodged a protest with the Bangladesh government over the award of some offshore areas to certain oil companies. The report has since been contradicted by Indian government spokesmen. Since the news of protest emanated from a Delhi newspaper, the Bangladesh government had no obligation to speak on the matter.

But the fact remains that India has already served notice on the Union Oil Company, one of the lessees of the offshore areas for oil-exploration. As the report goes, the issue of territorial waters remained a hot potato during the visit despite the Bangladesh government's citation of the consensus of the Caracas conference on territorial waters.

This new turn in the Indo-Bangla dialogue does not necessarily mean that the Bangladesh government can withstand the Indian pressure. Conversely, this situation of tough-talking on issues and non-issues clearly

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underlines Indian displeasure over any attempt on the part of the Bangladesh government to move away from the dotted lines.

The dotted lines were certainly overstepped when news items trickled into the press about immediate trade relations with China, K.M. Kaiser's reported visit to the Chinese capital, Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's rather unexpected statement on the need for a viable defence on the Navy Day, the beginning of a breakthrough in countries like Lybia and the like.

One, however, wonders at the Indian aversion to smuggling from Bangladesh to India which never worked vice versa. The only point that has been agreed without a hitch was the aspect of smuggling and the need to contain and curb it. India had never admitted to the smuggling of primary goods from Bangladesh into its territory despite loud protests among the people, particularly the political opposition.

The Bangladesh government, which now officially acknowledges smuggling, was also guilty on the same count. It was primarily because the dominating section of the ruling party was and is still the main collaborator of the Indian merchant capital employed in smuggling operations.

The crackdown on the smugglers by the Indian government interestingly followed the influx of imported manufactured goods into India from Bangladesh. As long as it was simply jute or rice or hides and skin and such other primary products, the Indian government could not care less. But once the foreign goods imported under the wage-earners' scheme (which strangely fell under the grip of organised Marwari trading capital) began to threaten the equilibrium of the Indian manufacturing industry, India had to act.

It is understood that most of these items under the scheme are brought in by the holders of Indian black money. They are buying up pound sterling from Sylheti expatriates in London, bringing in goods from various

parts of the world, generating enough currency in Bangladesh to buy and smuggle jute and rice into India for a good premium and dumping the major portion of such goods into a highly profitable and quick-selling consumer's market in India.

The throwback is once again organised through a reconversion of the taka and the rupee into pound sterling through fool-proof channels which only they can afford. If Bangladesh is a loser in the bargain both in terms of primary products and foreign exchange earnings excepting some government revenue by way of taxes, India is a loser in terms of the threat that it poses to its manufacturing industry. The talk of smuggling which was taboo until the other day is thus being tackled with a vengeance.

And to that extent, Bangladesh is certainly benefitted notwithstanding the powerful clan of Bangladeshi collaborators of the king-smugglers of India. Possibly, with all their money stacked in heaps, they can now afford to say goodbye to their patrons.

Viewed thus and judged in the backdrop of the Indian compulsion to have a totally subservient government here, the familiarisation trip of Mr. Y.B. Chavan portends more than what meets the eye. There have been several reminders about Bangladesh's so-called commitments to India in 1971. Even Mr. Chavan says that there is nothing called permanent friends in diplomatic vocabulary. And he optimistically declares that all the problems can be certainly solved amicably. Here the term 'amicably' takes a different meaning. Or doesn't it?

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The Importance of the Present

And we harp on the forbidden ones like Adam's original sin and get away with the apple for what it is worth.

It is almost like a tedious monologue when the Bangladesh leadership tries to impress the moneylenders and the donors with the prospects of a many-splendoured future for this country. The reciprocation is also mechanical. We are paid back in the same words, like courtesy that costs nothing.

The obsession with the futurity and few-charity has come to be regarded as a singularly Bangladesh virtue. It is more so for the leaders whose stake in the time present is as blandly cannibalistic as in the time future. But that is a known fact with which all of us have to bear in our wretched existence.

Notwithstanding a world turning its back on Bangladesh, there are still some who choose to be generous. They are now few and far between given the record of three years of plunder and misrule. But emotions are strange and varied. And we harp on the forbidden ones like Adam's original sin and get away with the apple for what it is worth.

It took us several tortuous tours to obtain some cash—both long and short-term. The baby-faced Foreign Minister has trudged the world like nobody's business in quest of money. In the process he struck some oil deals way before he became the petroleum minister. But that is another story and has to do a lot with Petro-Bangla and the oil deals.

The manna from the Emirates and the deposits from the oil Sheikhs are the latest trophies in our money chase. Ironically, this is being interpreted as a major breakthrough in the Muslim world. This interpretation—thanks to our supposed naivete—takes on a different

note when it is slyly proffered as a measure of independence from the obsessive Indian influence in our polity and economy.

This is where the truth has to be told in the greater national interest and in view of the principal contradiction which needs to be resolved in order to accomplish the national democratic revolution in Bangladesh. In other words, we must be very clear-headed in ignoring these minor illusions for the greater struggle for national independence, sovereignty, democratic rights and a people's democratic order.

The Bangladesh foreign policy so far has been revolving around the kingpin of monetary doles-be they from the imperialist West, Social imperialist Soviet Union, expansionist India or the oil-rich Muslim world. The national interest, I mean the interest of a sovereign people, has been totally ignored in all these efforts. That is how our moves in south-East Asia floundered, the government's desperate plea for American money and guarantee went unheeded and the love for China bounced back from the Chinese wall. It is a truism that needs to be reckoned with in our conscious moments.

The principal contradiction in Bangladesh somehow boils down to Indian hegemony and expansionist moves backed by the two super-powers. This is being slowly and surely carried out to the detriment of the Bengali national aspirations of all classes by a subservient government.

If the contradiction at the people's level has its natural echo in the ruling circles, it is because there could still be some patriotic elements in the ruling party. But they cannot resolve this contradiction by drifting away from the chartered route to erratic directions. Because, they will invariably land in the lap of imperialism, expansionism and social imperialism whose agents have decided on a division of the world at a graduated level.

If the contradiction at the people's level has its natural echo in the ruling circles, it is because there could still be some patriotic elements in the ruling party.

Hence it is imperative on the part of the patriotic elements in the ruling party, particularly the Prime Minister, to try to resolve this contradiction through a national effort.

It is pitiable to see the leader of the Government of Bangladesh running from pillar to post to resolve this contradiction. It is one thing to express one's solidarity with the Third World. But it is another thing to harp on the Muslim identity to get the better of India or, for that matter, play the tune of imperialism in desperation to get American milk and honey.

In fact, that is what has been happening over the past few months—an indirectional drift that will lead us back to square one. The resolution of this contradiction has to be preceded by bringing about a change in the domestic scene, because the bright future of a country or nation does not lie in the future but in the present socio-political matrix and in the unleashing of the patriotic social forces now under suppression in this country.

But for a few gold-diggers in the ruling party and the collaborators of Indian merchant capital and the expansionist Government in Delhi, there is hardly any individual, group or institution in this country which is not aware of this contradiction. Hence it is imperative on the part of the patriotic elements in the ruling party, particularly the Prime Minister, to try to resolve this contradiction through a national effort.

And that can only be done by the ushering in of democratic politics, releasing all political prisoners, enabling the patriotic forces to advance their politics among the masses, and curbing the anti-national activities of the agents of imperialism, social imperialism and Indian expansionism. Ask anyone, they can be counted on one's fingers. Or else, the country would have been non-existent by this time.

Credible authority need of the hour

The executive orders issued under the emergency ordinance of December 28, 1974 are in fact a rephrasing of what had been enacted before. For all practical purposes, they are the derivatives of the Special Powers Act and similar other legislations which the Parliament was obliged to vet from time to time.

The relevance or otherwise of this spate of orders concerning public service, unauthorised occupation, hoarding, smuggling and black-marketing and what is commonly described as anti-state activities is not the point at issue. Because the state of emergency does not signify a qualitative change in the dispensation of the government or for that matter in the socio-political spectrum. The difference is quantitative in so far as the government is sewing up the loose seams in its administrative fabric.

So far so good after lot of crying wolf. An emergency situation existed in Bangladesh long before an official admission of it. The situation developed in direct proportion to governmental malfunction, economic and political laissez faire by the dominant section of the power elite, corruption with confidence by some among others, and if we may say with impunity, an absence of democratic tolerance. These issues need not be gone into, since we have talked about them times without number in the columns of this paper and often at the peril of our existence. And we must also concede that we have heard muffled echoes of it even in the government circles.

One thing leads to another. The governmental drag in putting its house in order and in dealing with the

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Inter and intra-institutional antagonism also grew beyond resolution, and thereby further weakened the functional capacity of the institutions of the government.

obvious maladies of corruption, smuggling, resource transfer and political interference in the discharge of functions by the administration, has damaged its base of credible authority. Consequently, people would frown at each pledge or commitment made by the powers-that-be; nor would they count the threats of firing squads with a minimal regard. This is where the government has suffered a cold rebuff from its constituents' display of grim nonchalance.

We have stated many times before that the major problem confronting the political leadership in Bangladesh in charge of the state is not the threat of seizure of power by contenders both in the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary fora, but a crisis of governance. The style of administration and politics created its own antithesis within the sanctum sanctorum of power, and also in the peripheries, resulting in the debilitation of the administrative and productive machinery of the state. A sense of negation and not positivism, eroded whatever vitality was left in the state machine. In the process, tensions developed within the power structure. Inter and intra-institutional antagonism also grew beyond resolution, and thereby further weakened the functional capacity of the institutions of the government. This led to a near-anarchic situation in the economy and the polity as is evidenced from the anarchy in prices, law and order, production, distribution and administration.

The rise of terrorism on both sides of the fence, secret killings and a general breakdown of law and order are but a natural corollary to this objective reality. But establishment terror is no deterrent to the proliferation of this phenomenon. The government has consistently applied these age-worn and counterproductive tactics to resolve the crisis.

The state of emergency does not, therefore, alter the objective reality since it existed even before its proclamation. If it is simply meant to erase the last vestiges of open dissent-which hopefully it is not-the

government could as well have done without the proclamation.

The present political interregnum, however, marks the phase of the inevitable decline of political institutions under the circumstances as are obtaining in Bangladesh. It was inevitable because the ruling party itself in all its manifestations has run into obsolescence as a viable power-base of the Prime Minister who holds the unique position of being with it and without it. The executive is bound to emerge as the stronger component of the state in the bargain. The trends are already showing. Talks of possible shake-up in the cabinet and induction of technocrats in it under a projected presidential form of government point towards this trend.

But will a facelift or new arrangement of government resolve the crisis? Other things remaining equal, the answer is a straight no. Since state power is not an abstraction-whether it is wielded by one individual or the political institutions or the executive-it has to concretise its duties and obligations to the people by attempting to satisfy the latter's subjective and objective needs. The subjective needs are political and the objective needs are material. When these needs are not met and are attempted to be repressed, the state power cannot sustain itself with sheer force or mere rhetoric. The steel-frames of highly powerful government machines have collapsed many times in history for similar reasons. Even mass antipathy, not to speak of resistance, can bring about such a pass for any government. Bangladesh is an excellent case in point.

It must be remembered in this context that infusion of the fear of authority among the people is no substitute for the establishment of credible authority. The fear is there with or without the state of emergency; but credibility is missing. This credibility can be restored only through an effective check on the existing maladies, which are too well-known to be recounted, by taking the nation into confidence and by mobilising a national

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effort through the establishment of governmental goodwill. On top of it all, the government must also put above everything else the patriotic and sovereign interest of this nation.

So far the government's executive orders can be seen as the normal by-products of an emergency ordinance. The actions in respect of combating the obstructive forces in production, distribution and law and order have been half-hearted. This has kept the people suspended between the edge of fear and some kind of expectancy. The former, however, outweighs the latter because of the experiences of the past. There is also a lurking apprehension that some forces inimical to the democratic aspirations of this nation may take advantage of this interregnum to intensify the attack on the democratic forces at the behest of their external masters. If that be the case, that would be the end of the story. But let's have heart, and wait till the die is cast in the third week of January in the Jatiyo Sangsad.

Goodbye to planners without tears

The Planning Commission is dead; long live the Planning Commission.

There could perhaps be no better epitaph on the tablet of what once glittered like gold atop nine-storeyed quarters of the Bangladesh Secretariat. The foursome partnership that had started in early 1972 goes into liquidation with the final exit of Deputy Chairman Dr. Nurul Islam. He is reported to have resigned and is on his way to take up what was long expected of him—a teaching job in one of the Western universities.

The Planning Commission never really got off the ground despite the myth of super-duper and academic excellence. The worm in its apple was detected when the partnership suffered a defection in the person of Dr. Anisur Rahman. In his wisdom and possibly foresight, Dr. Rahman preferred the anonymity of a university teacher to the ministerial plumes of a Planning Commission Member. The rest, however, went on undaunted to build their vast empire of super-bureaucracy that inevitably crumbled under its own weight of failures.

There was a time when the Planning Commission was being looked upon with awe and reverence. It was the repository of wisdom and power, or so some people thought in their illusory dreams. But in fact, it was dressed up as the impressive show-window of economic sophistry that meant precious little for the people within, and the funders without.

And in the predictable petty-bourgeois tradition, the planners mistook the wood for the trees,

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masqueraded as ideologues of a Communist party and laid the foundations of one of the greatest debacles in economic history. In the process, they virtually worked as fall-guys for various economic and political interests.

All these they did in good faith as they had studied Economics in the Anglo-Saxon schools and earned that quaint radicalism that invariably goes with a lack of social consciousness. From Keynes to Galbraith or Marx to Sweezy, everyone is on their fingertips. But what they knew not are the country and the people, and the preconditions necessary for a socialist transformation. That was perhaps excusable. But what is not is their obsession with their great experiment that was not only Quixotic but plain deceitful.

Thus between impressive seminars, piles of paperwork and lots of travel, the Planning Commission produced one of the greatest bluffs in Bangladesh history, the First Five-Year Plan. It was preceded by two Annual Development Plans including the one which was the launching year of the 1st Five-Year Plan, which had to be practically thrown out of the window for an appalling shortfall in the stipulated 155 crore taka of revenue surplus and 352 crore takas of projected foreign aid.

The fate of the Annual Development Plans and the Five-Year Plan was doomed not because of the state of the world but by their dishonest projections. The entire castle of socialist reconstruction was built on what we have described on many occasions as dishonest window-dressing of figures and statistics. In one earlier exercise, we ventured to show how several items of revenue and expenditure were inflated and deflated respectively to present a surplus.

Only five items were taken up for the purpose of discussion like the nationalised industries, sales of savings bank certificates, sales tax and the like, which by themselves reduce the net revenue by about 100 crores necessitating much greater bank-borrowings

than the stipulated 18 crore takas. The same has happened with the projection of export earnings, and the source and quantum of external resources.

The Planning Commission, as it was composed, had thus to die its natural death. Over the last year, two more members resigned, and now is the turn for its chief architect. During their tenure—their ideological commitments and colour notwithstanding—they were called variously the Awami League economists, super-bureaucrats, indigenous Harvard group and the like.

Sceptics even invented a fourth member of the Planning Commission in the exclusive sanctum of their grand isolation. Like most, we are not going to shed tears for them. Because they have done their job of destruction in tandem with some greedy politicians and business people. The only difference is that they had to go out first not because they are the worst, but because they are the weakest of the lot.

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Changeover incomplete

The Council of Ministers will only 'aid and advise the President in the exercise of his functions' and 'shall hold office during the pleasure of the President.'

If the presidential form came as a predictable change, the composition of the Council of Ministers thereafter did not. The element of surprise-in-the-raw following the suspense-laden swearing-in ceremony could only be matched by an anti-climax in an action drama. But for a few senior compatriots of the President and some new entrants, the oath-script came to most of them as a bonanza, so to speak.

Not that the Council of Ministers means much under a presidential system since 'the executive authority of the Republic shall vest in the President and shall be exercised by him, either directly or through officers subordinate to him, in accordance with the Constitution'. The Council of Ministers will only 'aid and advise the President in the exercise of his functions' and 'shall hold office during the pleasure of the President.'

In the new political arrangement, the Ministers and the Parliament would obviously have a lesser role. The new political institutions would be subordinated to the institutions of the government, which under the projected single national party would be interchangeable with the political institution in so far as their constituents 'in the service of the Republic shall be qualified to be a member of the national party.'

How this equation shall be worked out is still anybody's guess since the President is yet to announce the composition, character and structural pattern of the projected single national party.

It is in this backdrop that we have to view the composition of the Council of Ministers and its substantive role vis a vis policy planning, statecraft

and the whole works of politics and administration. Coming as it did in the wake of breathless developments leading to a constitutional changeover, it was somewhat anti-climatic. It was not because of the desirability or otherwise of the persons sworn in. It was because the heavily-dented profile of the government hardly looked better in public eye after cabinet-changes.

The political facelift was thus not commensurate with the spectaculars of the fast-moving dynamics of the situation. Their rationale for this is hard to find. It is more so because there was no compulsion to keep up a semblance of the immediate past in the new scheme of things. To a political observer, it seems more an interim arrangement made by the President precedent to a phased-out transition to the new arrangement of one-party governance.

The fact that the interim arrangement has been made at a certain cost—that of some degree of popular cynicism—indicates that the timing of the changeover has been earlier than scheduled for certain compelling circumstances. To hypothesize, the circumstances can be both internal and external and all kinds of factors including inner-party contradictions. Likely realignment of political forces within and outside the Awami League may have contributed to an abrupt declaration of the state of emergency at least two weeks in advance of the speculated timing.

The government was in jitters not because of political insurgency at odd places but because its own fortress was being weakened by the infiltration of alien interest. The accent on foreign interests in the recent speeches of President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman before the changeover is a clear pointer to this. Hence was the need for the consolidation of state power of which President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was and is the focal point.

This dichotomy in approach and action during

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This dichotomy in approach and action during this transitional phase is therefore confusing.

this transitional phase is therefore confusing. But it is not so if we look at the format from the above angle. It is also to be noted here that so far the style of politics in its superficial aspects has not changed; but the style of administration has. The induction of Mr. A.K.M. Ahsan and Brigadier (now Major General) Majedul Huq into the close quarters of the President to be followed up by many such appointments from within the administration and outside, is indicative of the preponderance of the executive over the political institution.

The single national party which shall take birth at the instance of the President will be more to conform to the administration than be its guiding light. In the new dispensation, President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman takes precedence as the repository of executive powers of the state over the single national party he will command.

National party—when and whither?

Knowledgeable quarters believe that the projected single national party may not be formed post-haste by President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Two weeks have already elapsed since the lightning passage of the Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act, 1975. Another 30 days may as well tick away before the expiry of its gestation period.

If at all it (the one-party) happens to be announced earlier, the new conglomerate will at best be presaged by an announcement of the nomenclature, hierarchical structure and the principles and programmes in capsule.

The political proceedings which have now narrowed down to the central theme of one-party system betray precious little with regard to the shape of things to come. Although a lot more is happening than meets the eye, the present limbo has kept the zealous incumbents on their toes as much as it has deepened the suspense for the middle-ground political elements on the other side of the fence.

While the single national party comes as a fait accompli, the prospective composition still remains a closely guarded secret. Or else it is still indeterminate in view of the pulls and pressures that make politics in Bangladesh a game of wit. Even in the absence of wit, the game is on, albeit on the sly.

Logic, however, dictates that the composition would not fit into the much-trumpeted model of the still-born Gono Oikyo Jute—the aborted alliance of the Awami League, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (Moni Singh) and the National Awami Party (Muzaffar). The

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Marxism-tailism-and-Moni Singh's Thoughts have finally run into the groove of an uncertain future.

If the pronouncements of the President and the constitutional provision about the national party are taken literally, a composite national unity under the flag of the new party leaves a lot of room for manoeuvre by the President in his choice of persons and groups. It is not unlikely that he may as well open dialogues with those who are positioned on the outside limits of the so-called 'patriotic political parties'. The process could as well begin after the announcement of the nomenclature or that of a central or executive committee along with it.

But one thing seems certain. The launching of the party will not mark a major departure from the basic pattern of the Awami League excepting that it will be different in its persona and structure. The open-door policy of the President will, however, tempt others to talk it out in terms of participation in the new arrangement. But essentially it will remain a solo exercise in so far as the leader, the party, the government and the state will melt into one single entity under President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's supreme guidance.

In this foursome equation in governance, the prerogative of each component shall be determined at a graduated level with the ultimate in statecraft resting with the President. To repeat what we have been saying so long, the institutions of the government will have precedence over the political apparatus: the former will provide the President with the instrumentalities of governance, and to that extent will strike an equation of unequal complementarity with the political component.

In such a scheme, only individuals and not platforms would fit into the projected single national political party. And as such, it would make it difficult for the petty-bourgeois political organisations, committed to gradualism in the political and the economic processes, to take initiatives of their own. The onus obviously falls on the President if he so chooses to

discuss their possible participation in the new monolith to be created by him.

The two political parties, namely, the CPB and the Muzaffar NAP, which have been staking their strategy and tactic on the hope of effective participation in the projected single national party, are now the most perturbed ones. In the absence of any meaningful participation in the projected single party, they may, and will, find themselves in the lurch, and thereby completely shut out from the benign patronage of the state.

Such an eventuality has already propelled them to move on a different line—cautious enough not to offend President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and yet looking for other safety valves before the stone is dropped on their feet. It is learnt that while hopes in the CPB circles are lingering that the Sheikh will indemnify them by giving them a place in the sun, they are also lobbying for a separate existence as the other party like that of Syria and Iraq.

To revert to the prospects of the coming event, that is, the launching of the single national party, it seems logical that the entire persona and demeanour of the government will undergo an instant transformation as and when the party is announced. The present interregnum represents a vacuum. The reformation of the Cabinet has been done for the sake of continuity. The new shake-up with all its ramifications is likely to come in a package along with the formation and announcement of the party. This is inherent in the dynamics of the situation. The only question remains: when?

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Unity in struggle

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Political changes in Bangladesh have been eluding expectations but for some peripheral exercises. A month and a half is already past since the loaded thunder of change has waned into a langourous monotony. The big events have come and gone like routine festivals which weigh heavier than the joy they bring.

This state of non-happening, which the world press has noted with express mockery, is once again strung together by the beads of rhetorics. But it no longer sparkles as in the olden days to cover the dark patches of national failures.

If the present is a continuity in time, we don't have it at all. It slips away from under our feet faster than quicksand. We indulge in shadow-boxing in a fit of self-deception and look for the winner's trophy. Meanwhile, reality takes its own toll on a nation whose only fault lay in its struggle for emancipation. And the vengeance is too much to bear even for the proverbial resilience of the Bengalee people.

The spectacle is devastatingly morbid. It neither stirs nor numbs. It holds you on the leash of a suspended sentence of three more years which has suddenly elongated into an unspecified timespan of a second revolution. It curiously started with a whimper unlike the previous occasions, and is yet to find its resonance in the popular mind both here and without. The new carriage with all its erstwhile riders is, as if, feeling its way before it skids into a roadside ditch.

What is happening in the suspense-laden drama of the second revolution could not as yet graduate beyond some political horse-trading in the open or on the sly. The quality of intent is suspect and the quantity

of achievement a bluff. The whole future thus portends a fortuitous variation of a damning sequence of the present times.

Nothing possibly could be worse than what it is today. Only doom can beat it all. Hence optimism fights back in a pitch dark tunnel of an unrewarding politics that holds little light at the end of it. Or it may as well be a blind tunnel with no way to go. We are just in the middle of it singly, collectively, and as a nation.

If the flower of democracy has wilted before it could blossom, we have no tears to shed for it. Because it hardly existed even in its distorted frame. If socialism has got a bad name for the greed of the few, we would not moan its plight. Because it was more of a pillar than of an aim for those who build their castle of power. If nationalism and secularism have demeaned themselves in the hands of the ruling coterie, we express no surprise at it. Because we had known it all the time.

But today is different. It is the moment of a patriotic fight back against the drift. The shades of grey have been wiped off our political canvas under the new monolithic system. Nothing exists between the black and the white, at least for the moment. It is in this perspective that we have to weigh and determine our present role, both individually and collectively, and opt for the new role for the greater good.

Let us not suffer anymore from an excess of useless petty- bourgeois liberalism or misplaced radical intent. With the narrowing of the avenues of struggle, we must not give up the fight. Let it be from within so that the patriot's nightmare can end once for all. And it shall also be from without so that a revolutionary's dream can come true. It is this unity in struggle from within and without which can save the nation from doom.

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The telltale of development and complementarity

The regression in the economy and the stagnation of the entire productive process were primarily due to the political constraints.

Of all the ministerial charges in Bangladesh, that of industries can be the most frustrating. The demarche on investment has done it little good; the open-ended invitation to foreign capital is still tucked in the postman's bag. It is no wonder that Mr. A.H.M. Quamruzzaman on his return to the cabinet after a longish spell shall find the going rough.

It is none of his fault. Because the industrial sector in Bangladesh is a lab of what is so profoundly described as non-capitalist development. This neuter concept, coupled with Professor Ulyanovsky's recipe of non-Marxist socialism and that of complementarity with the Indian economy, has put the country on the reverse gear.

The backward slide has been the compound effect of a non-productive (more appropriately anti-productive), non-developmental (more appropriately anti-developmental) economic strategy that turned Bangladesh into a bazaar economy in favour of robber capital looking for the easy kill of cheap primary produces.

The regression in the economy and the stagnation of the entire productive process were primarily due to the political constraints about which we have written volumes in the past.

Essentially, Bangladesh suffers from the inevitable predicaments of a nation-state whose economic options are severely limited by the constraints of a dependency.

Hence socialism was turned into a tool for stagnating the productive process and a mechanism for capital accumulation by those who came to wield political power in conjunction with the powerful and all-pervasive Indian merchant capital. The country was virtually turned into a land of black money that created anarchy in trade,

commerce, industry, even agriculture and in the entire economic life of the people.

The entente of the local comprador class with the Indian black money-power resulted in the progressive drainage of Bangladesh's resources through smuggling and a large-scale flight of capital—both old and new—which was denied the scope of investment in productive channels.

The ridiculous ceiling of investment that was fixed at 25 lakh takas is a pointer to this. As if the road to socialism can be spanned by one single leap, and that too by a political and state machine which is singularly unsuited to carry forward the task. Thus, on the one hand, the act of nationalisation—which was in essence a compulsive measure in so far as those industries mostly belonged to the Pakistani bourgeoisie—was ruthlessly used for plunder and debilitation of the productive process and, on the other, investments of national capital were completely shut out by a moratorium on productive investment.

The Bangladesh economy was thrown consequently into the hands of merchant capital, *phorias* and black-money holders whose sole objective was to multiply the ill-gotten capital by resorting to illegal trade like smuggling and hoarding or the transfer of it outside the country for consumption and security.

The resultant anarchy found its reflection in the political sphere as well. The present experiment at changing the political superstructure with its drastic political fall-out is just another attempt at the futility to resolve this anarchy in all its aspects.

The raising of the ceiling from 25 lakh takas to three crore takas in the last quarter of 1974 did not substantively alter the situation excepting provoking some theoretical debates between Badruddin Umar in *Holiday* and Anil Mukherjee in *EKATA* and a series of polemical and theoretical dissertations in the *Viewpoint* column of this paper. Strangely, some of them smell the rat of capitalist restoration in the position as if a big bourgeoisie was already on the make and was about ready to grab the chance.

The act of nationalisation—which was in essence a compulsive measure in so far as those industries mostly belonged to the Pakistani bourgeoisie—was ruthlessly used for plunder.

But what is most important in this respect is the elimination of the rule of black money and the anti-production fetish.

In a situation where capital—old or new—accruing from a capitalist mode of production or sheer economic banditry is diverted to illegal channels and thereby denies the country of its productive role and moreover helps the process of resource transfer or smuggling, it should be only patriotic to “divert its operation from black-money in illegal trade and smuggling to proper capitalist production which will not only pave the way for increased production but will also enlarge the working class base in this country at a faster rate than it is otherwise possible.”

This does not mean a deviation from the socialist path—even from the so-called socialist path that was being pursued by the Awami League government and its political allies in the NAP(M) and the CPB. Inducements to private investments in certain specified sectors and with some limitations of state control do not also defeat the socialist objective and the trend which, as we have mentioned before, cannot be reversed in Bangladesh for obvious socio-political reasons. It is all the more important since the strength of a socialist struggle is basically derived from the productive forces and not from anything else.

Yet investments are not forthcoming. Why? Is it simply because of the so-called absence of an investment climate? Is it because of labour unrest or lack of capital mobilisation? These are all peripheral factors and they basically are the creations of the government. That's how syndicalism was allowed to proliferate in the name of workers' control, distribution was thrown into confusion for the sake of creating a new class of intermediaries and pricing was done without any economic considerations.

These are all curable maladies given the necessary will and administrative vigour. But what is most important in this respect is the elimination of the rule of black money and the anti-production fetish. This can only be done by taking the necessary economic and fiscal measures and by recasting the industrial policy in consonance with the national interest. And herein comes the issue of complementarity with India—an issue on which we shall write next week.

The Telltale of Development and complementarity-II

The issues of 'complementarity' and 'smuggling' often inflame the political temper of those who live by it. While some of them would brand the detractors of Indo-Bangla economic complementarity as heretics and saboteurs, some others would bring in the question of logistics and availability of transport to disprove the phenomenon of smuggling.

The deliberation of these quarters in their faithful pursuit of the theses of complementarity and what they call the marginal impact of smuggling is persistent. This is notwithstanding the fact that even the Government of Bangladesh and its leaders have admitted the fact of smuggling, and are uneasy over the pet issue of complementarity. Most patriots, however, look upon this twin issue as the major instrument of subordinating the Bangladesh economy to India precedent to an unequal economic integration like that of a traditional colony with an industrial metropolitan country.

Complementarity in the traditional sense is a function of differential resource endowments in different regions or countries. Nevertheless, it neither is a necessary nor is it a sufficient condition for trade between two nations or countries. As Dr. Akhlaqur Rahman put it in his serialized article in Holiday entitled 'Indo- Bangladesh economic relations,' "Given the state of technology and the system of preferences, differential resource endowments do create conditions for the opening up of trade between different regions. But it does not automatically follow that the trading partners will benefit from such trade nor does it follow that free trade will be beneficial for all."

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Continuing, Dr. Rahman said: "In the text-book sense, the primary production countries and the rapidly industrialised metropolitan countries in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries had complementary economies... But the colonial pattern of trade resulted not only in the ruthless exploitation of the colonies but also in the creation and perpetuation of structural imbalances in their economies, hence in the perpetuation of their backwardness and under-development."

If this be the general hypotheses, the issue of complementarity between Bangladesh and India needs to be judged in its historical frame and in the light of the pattern of production and trade as had obtained before 1947 and after. The intervening period of twenty five years marks a total rupture with the pre-1947 trade relations and thereby is of utmost importance in our determination of the basic assumption on which the economic relations between Bangladesh and India should develop.

The pre-1947 pattern of production and trade in this region may be recounted here in brief to enunciate the nature of complementarity that had existed at that point of time. "Up to 1948-49, about 80 per cent of our export to India was accounted for by one commodity, namely raw jute. Over 75 per cent of our import from India comprised of manufactures. We used to produce about 70 per cent of raw jute in undivided India and over 72 per cent of our total output used to be consumed in India. In 1948-49, the production of jute in Bangladesh amounted to 62 lakh bales; it was about 20 lakh bales in India. The consumption of raw jute in India was over 62 lakh bales. Almost the entire jute manufacturing industry was developed in and around Calcutta.

"Production and trade patterns in Bangladesh and India upto 1948- 49 were highly complementary. Bangladesh, like traditional colonies, used to produce

the basic raw materials and the entire processing used to be done by India. This hinterland relationship had its well-known impact on the development of the entire system of transportation and other infrastructural facilities in Bangladesh. No traditional theory of location could give a reasonable explanation of the concentration of the entire jute processing industries in or around Calcutta since neither the cost of transportation nor the cost of labour could provide any valid economic reason for the location of jute manufacturing outside Bangladesh. Also the absence of infrastructural facilities could not be a reason, since more often than not, the latter are induced by the growth of demand for them."

The pre-1947 pattern which had the basic characteristics of colonial trade was reversed by a sudden rupture of the traditional trade-relations between India and Pakistan that was contingent upon compulsive political factors obtaining at that time with regard to the mutual relations between India and the then Pakistan. The rupture, however, did not take place before September 1949 when Pakistan refused to devalue in conjunction with India; and the disagreement over the rate of exchange between Indian and Pakistani currencies proved a sufficient condition for the break in the pre-1947 Indo-Pak and hence Indo-Bangladesh trade relations.

Whatever the justification or otherwise of the Pakistani decision to maintain its old exchange rate, the Indian refusal to accept that under those circumstances was construed by many as its political desire to strangle the newly created state economically.

The hiatus so created led to certain readjustment problems for both the countries consequent upon the drastic and rather sudden economic isolation. As Dr. Akhlaqur Rahman in his exhaustive exercise on the subject published in Holiday says: "In the absence of

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The growth of processing functions in respect of jute in the then East Pakistan had its corresponding impact on the Calcutta-based industries.

such adjustments both the countries were destined to incur significant economic losses in terms of fall in production, employment and income.

"Consumption-oriented adjustment had basically involved finding alternative channels of trade... but trade diversion could only solve a very small proportion of Pakistan since the major proportion of the basic raw materials produced in her two wings used to be processed by India.

"In the absence of the substitution of India's processing functions elsewhere, Pakistan herself had to do such substitution which involved the difficult task of creating the appropriate supply of capital and entrepreneurship as well as the required infrastructural facilities. Thus the replacement of the Indian processing functions by nature had to be growth-oriented. Such adjustments once undertaken were bound to change the pattern of production and trade in Pakistan."

This process of adjustment that took place over a fairly long time centered on the substitution of the processing functions in the then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, through the initiation of industrial development, particularly in the jute sector. Thus the consumption of raw jute from a bare 30,000 bales in 1948-49 rose to 34 lakh bales in 1969-70. The output of jute manufactures also increased from 1.6 lakh tons in 1957-58 to 5.9 lakh tons in 1969-70 or nearly 60 per cent of the Indian output of jute manufactures.

The growth of processing functions in respect of jute in the then East Pakistan had its corresponding impact on the Calcutta-based industries. The consumption of raw jute in India did not increase much and fluctuated between 60 lakh bales in 1958-59 and 65 lakh bales in 1974. (India also grappled with the adjustment problem by increasing its production of raw jute but could hardly feed its manufacturing capacity beyond the peak of 86 per cent and that too at the expense of rice acreage).

There has also been a corresponding fall in its output of jute manufacture and export of jute manufactures from about 9 lakh tons in 1966 to about 6.5 lakh tons in 1969. Hence, the relationship of complementarity changed into one of competitiveness over time resulting in the slow but inexorable debilitation and stagnation of the pre-1947 industrial base of Calcutta.

In 1971 after independence, Bangladesh had to face another economic isolation for the second time consequent upon the total breach of economic relationship with the then West Pakistan, now Pakistan; but there was a fundamental structural change in its economy, i.e. the growth of a manufacturing sector, especially that of the jute manufacturing sector which is almost equal in capacity to that of India.

The votaries of complementarity decided to overlook this fundamentality in order to put the clock back to 1947 and once again re-enact the hinterland relationship between Bangladesh and India, more particularly between primary producing Bangladesh and the industrial conurbation of Eastern India with Calcutta as its epicentre.

There has also been a corresponding fall in its output of jute manufacture

The telltale of development and complementarity-III

The subcontinental nation-states including the Himalayan kingdoms with their varied systems and stages of social development are not always a happy lot in their bilateral relationship with India.

The chorus of complementarity between the economies of India and Bangladesh is unhistorical. Because the structural changes that occurred in the economy of Bangladesh from 1947 to 1971 reversed the pre-partition pattern of production and trade, making it incumbent on Bangladesh to sharpen the edge of its competitiveness with India in the interest of its economic growth. The latter would necessitate the raising of the required tariff wall between Bangladesh and India since Bangladesh's capacity to compete with India is far less, because of well-known historical reasons.

This does not necessarily imply no trade or drastically restricted trade with India; it would necessarily call for a carefully formulated trade and economic policy which, while safeguarding the conditions of economic growth in Bangladesh, would facilitate harnessing of maximum mutual advantages.

The formulation of such a policy is difficult; indeed it becomes more difficult or quite impossible if the theory of complementarity is intended to be used as an instrument of economic subordination or for making the trade relations between the two countries nearly free. Under the circumstances one cannot help but impute ulterior motives to the votaries of complementarity.

The subcontinental nation-states including the Himalayan kingdoms with their varied systems and stages of social development are not always a happy lot in their bilateral relationship with India.

Because it is an undeniable historical fact that there exists a metropolitan attitude and hegemonic psyche amongst a powerful section of the Indian ruling class-a

class which would have liked to see the complete political integration of the subcontinent, Bangladesh inclusive. This could have meant the realisation of what its neighbours suspect to be the intrinsic expansionist design.

Talking purely in the context of Bangladesh, for historical and political reasons a complete political integration is impossible: so also impossible is complete economic integration, specially in the short run. This is not possible because of the historically determined fact of the first partition of 1947, the consequent reversal of the hinterland relationship between pre-1947 Bangladesh and metropolitan Calcutta, the growing edge of competitiveness in the economy of post-1947 East Bengal, now Bangladesh, and the reactive nationalism of its people. Hence, the long-run Indian dream of becoming a central power with vassals in South Asia can only be achieved through subtler means.

One of the ways would be to lead the country to adopt economic policies which would ultimately work toward the twain objective of subordination and integration. Thus in the name of comparative advantages, the process of economic subordination was imperceptibly but surely set in motion. And as we all know they are the traditional weapons in the arsenal of vulgar bourgeois economics, the eternal servant of imperialism.

Adherence to the theory of complementarity for us would imply a complete stagnation in our industrial sector and export trade since, as stated earlier, Bangladesh's capacity to compete in respect of its primary and secondary products is much less as compared to India. It requires no sophistry to realise that if complementarity is taken as the fundamental premise, in five years' time all our jute manufacturing and textile plants would have to close down. The signs are already unmistakable. The regression from a pre-take off industrial stage, which we inherited in 1971, to a hinterland of West Bengal as of 1947 is once again being re-enacted with calculated vengeance.

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The rising Bengalee bourgeoisie, which at one stage of the movement for autonomy, formed the class base of the Awami League was also in disarray in the face of the attack by the nationalisers.

The other way would be to create impediments to the efficient implementation of economic policies relating to production and trade in order to frustrate the recovery of the economy and through it to ensure the euthanasia of the competitive power of the economy. Attempts have been made to prevent the recovery of the nationalised industries which at times took the semblance of organised sabotage of the industrial plants and inventories.

The attempt of the exogenous forces to subordinate and integrate the Bangladesh economy with the growing metropolis of the newly-emerged sub-regional power of India could not have succeeded without the abetment of powerful indigenous collaborators. Hence of relevance is the character of the dominant section of the ruling class which essentially remains the principal servitor of Indian metropolitan interests.

The character of the ruling class, particularly that of the dominant section, is clearly *lumpen* in so far as it represents the most corrupt and most backward section of our bourgeoisie. The extent of their economic cannibalism, coupled with relentless destruction of the productive sector and capital transfer, has produced one of history's worst national miscarriages. Consequently, the national economy has fallen in to the grip of black money-the robber capital-causing an apparently interminable but organised anarchy in production and prices. And Bangladesh saw the emergence of a new class of mercantile capitalists having a comprador character.

The emergence of this class was carefully nurtured as part of a political strategy in a vacuum left by the Pakistani bourgeoisie. The rising Bengalee bourgeoisie, which at one stage of the movement for autonomy, formed the class base of the Awami League was also in disarray in the face of the attack by the nationalisers.

The new ruling group lacked a class character and was a loose formation of various interests without any firm social foundation. The absence of a firm social foundation made it thoroughly dependent on exogenous

forces and it basically remained an extension of the Mujibnagar interest groups.

The mechanism of the creation of the new class of dependent mercantile capitalists is plainly unorthodox. Complete advantage was taken of the nationalisation programme to create a process of distribution through issuance of permits, encouragement of expropriation of abandoned commercial houses, small industries, properties and anything that ranged from the ridiculous to the sublime.

On the other hand, the rule of black money was allowed to run supreme and was granted immunity in terms of its open operations in illegal trades like smuggling and hoarding. Even the financial institutions were made to abet in hoarding by advancing money to finance such illegal trade. Although corrective measures are being taken and although it is never too late, the bane of such policies has already caused near-irreparable damage to our economy.

This class again is completely subservient to the Indian merchant capital whose power is unlimited in terms of organisation and operations. One almost finds the parallel of the bygone days of the East India Company in the Bangladesh of today where a Nawab Sirajuddowla had to give in to the power of money in the fateful battle-ground of Plassey.

The combination of exogenous and internal forces conspired to turn Bangladesh into a dependent economy through an abstraction of policies. Thus through the parroting of non-capitalist development, the entire country was thrown into an anti-production culture; in the name of complementarity Bangladesh was to be turned into a raw material producing hinterland; productive forces were destroyed through the plunder of the nationalised and abandoned industries; national capital was forced out of the country by a calculated moratorium on productive investment.

On the other hand, the administration was decimated beyond recognition despite the fact that

One almost finds the parallel of the bygone days of the East India Company in the Bangladesh of today where a Nawab Sirajuddowla had to give in to the power of money in the fateful battle-ground of Plassey.

This is of vital importance for ensuring growth and productivity—a phenomenon completely alien to the Bangladesh economy—and the creation of new resources in this populous land of seventy-five million people.

Bangladesh inherited one of the finest corps of administrators, managerial cadres and technocrats. The working class was encouraged to go for a kind of syndicalism to the utter detriment of production, the management was corrupted through political persuasion and pressures, the decision-making process was completely debilitated for lack of delegated authority, education was degraded to the lowly level of ignorance, and the culture vulgarized through an imitation of the most rotten decadent culture of West Bengal.

All these put together comprise the *lumpen* aspect of the dominant section of the power-elite who acted as the willing collaborators of the alien capital and interests to reduce Bangladesh to a dependency in the graduated hierarchy of the world-imperialist complex.

Such is the objective situation and combination of forces which President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman faces in the initial days of his second revolution. Political aspects apart, the success or the failure of the second revolution precariously hinges on whether or not he will be able to salvage the nation from the politico-economic quagmire deliberately created by those who would like to impose their economic—hence political—hegemony on us.

Thus the new economic and industrial policy—if ever there is going to be one—must of necessity be formulated in the light of an objective analysis of the stage of social development, the compulsions stemming from the socialist aspirations of the people, a conscious effort at liberating the country from the political constraints limiting the government's freedom to think and act, and the demands of the production and trade patterns either in complement or in competition with Bangladesh's present partners in economic and political relations. This is of vital importance for ensuring growth and productivity—a phenomenon completely alien to the Bangladesh economy—and the creation of new resources in this populous land of seventy-five million people. It is an uphill task for the President and it needs unflinching political will.

Epilogue

As far as civil liberties are concerned, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Second Revolution in Bangladesh has lighted the way to dusty death. Holiday was a weekly from Dhaka, owned and edited by a personable young man, Enayetullah Khan. Extrovert, loquacious, steeped in bourgeois sophistication, generous to a fault, liking the good things in life, Enayetullah Khan had as many enemies as friends.

Some years ago it was still the heyday of Pakistan, Ayub Khan was President and all was apparently right with the world of the military-industrial establishment. Enayetullah chucked his cushy job with an American oil company and decided to start a political journal.

Holiday was the outcome. It was anti-establishment after a fashion, but then, by the middle 1960's nearly everybody in East Pakistan was against the establishment. What still marked out Enayetullah's venture was its anxiety to spell out the socio-economic content of political dissent. He came from a political family, his father was an old-time follower of Fazlul Huq who became the Speaker of the Pakistan Assembly, a younger brother was leader of one of the many communist factions up and down Dhaka's Topkhana Road.

Enayetullah had fun running the journal. Tongue in-cheek, he would write of the foibles of men in power and those aspiring to be in power. His racy style helped. And the journal had a certain audacious urbanity; Enayetullah would lift, not by anyone's leave, exciting material from other journals, never mind whether they were published a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand miles away. The outward aspects of Holiday were rather uninviting: it was an eight-page affair got up in the manner

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of a news-paper and printed in newsprint; little attention was ever paid to decor and display.

Nonetheless, Enayetullah enjoyed himself, and one dare say, so did his readers. He had basically a university clientele, and the circulation was limited. But in the fight against Pakistan's authoritarian regime, the Dhaka intelligentsia had a pivotal role to play. Enayetullah's Holiday, its fuming radicalism spiced with cynicism, had its hours of glory. There were many who would question his credentials; others were put off by his flamboyance; even so, Holiday kept serving the immediate cause, which was to liberate Bangladesh from the clutches of the Pakistan army junta.

The uncertainties hanging in the air (in 1971) could not cramp his style. Even the holy war of liberation he would treat with a formula of mockery and banter; he saw no reason not to prick the bubble of pretensions of would-be commissars. He always had a fund of stories to relate about important Bangladeshi personages, including the most venerable ones; they were more good-natured than malicious: his central object was to invite attention to his pet premise, which was that small town hustlers are not the stuff of which revolutions are made; they are bound to founder.

Enayetullah could not quite spell out what alternatives were available to the people of Bangladesh. That precisely defined his charm; just on this side of being irresponsible, he still took his role seriously. For a fledgling people open to many temptations, a journal of dissent ought to be worth its weight in gold; at least, Enayetullah thought, its weight should be a hundred times more than that of the namby-pamby lyricism of the establishment figures within the fold of the East Pakistan emigres huddled in Calcutta (in 1971).

The prevailing euphoria (in late December 1971) was a bad setting to resume one's Cassandraesque soliloquies. But he was not deterred, Holiday re-entered the scene. It would have been easy for him to join the

conformist bandwagon; there was a lot of gravy flowing; one needed quite an effort not to pick up at least some of it by trading off a modest quota of integrity. Holiday withstood the temptation. It kept gunning for the new establishment, and created a whole lot of new enemies in the process. Enayetullah, quite obviously, could not care less. Within the next few months, the journal came to be identified as being both anti-Awami League and anti-Government; it also came to be known for its consistent anti-Indian stance.

That, Holiday would explain, could not be helped. Gratitude is a brittle foundation on which to develop mutual relations between two sovereign nations. The Government of India has to be attacked for its choice of friends in Bangladesh, namely, the most corrupt and unscrupulous specimens from amongst the Awami League tribe. You must be held responsible for the company you keep, as also for the kind of policies you promote; there was nothing either xenophobic or personal in his anti-India diatribes, Enayetullah would assure his friends. You had to believe him, for he kept lifting, obviously in admiration and approval, radical pieces from Indian journals.

Anyway, even as corruption spread and the economic situation deteriorated in Bangladesh, he intensified his attacks on India. Holiday was an uneven journal: it sparkled only now and then, its target-shooting often went amiss, adding further to the number of its enemies. However, the owner-editor did not suffer from any qualms; he went on holding up to ridicule Sheikh Mujib's inept and corruption-ridden Government. Holiday drew attention to the fly-by-night political operators, out for a quick kill, who had suddenly arrived on the scene; it berated India's foreign policy; it praised China; it continued to reproduce interesting, but often absurd pieces from far-out publications. Despite the drabness of its format and transparent shortage of resources, Holiday was having the time of its life.

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It was too good to be true. There can be no such thing as liberal authoritarianism. Holiday lasted exactly a hundred days following the proclamation of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's second Revolution. It must have breached that invisible line beyond which enough is regarded as enough; the party is over, Enayetullah Khan has been in prison since early May, and Holiday has ceased to be. The press in Bangladesh, the world has been informed, is going to be thoroughly reorganised, without question in the image of the President's predilections.

Unlike in this country, written words evidently still carry a certain weight over there. No frivolity is to be allowed from now on; it is going to be one party, one leader, one political line, and dissidence is to be despatched to the gallows. Enayetullah likes the good things in life; he will have to make do with whatever he is able to lay his hands on in prison, for he may have to stay in for quite a while.

But, never mind the instance of Enayetullah, the Second Revolution is gathering pace. Everyday, more and more newsmen are joining Sheikh Mujib's composite party, Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League, BAKSAL), and swearing undying allegiance to the great leader. The non-joiners have a choice: they can go to prison, and languish there. Fortunately, few of them will be as foolish as Enayetullah Khan.

—A.M. in *Bombay's*
'The economic and political weekly', June 4, 1975

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barely out of his teens and still a student of Dhaka University, **Enayetullah Khan** started out as a cub-reporter in the Pakistan Observer in 1959. An early exposure to major assignments, along with inclusion in state entourage abroad, soon earned for him the coveted by-line — a distinction reserved only for veterans at that time.

Having done his Masters in Philosophy from Dhaka University in 1960, Enayetullah Khan stayed with the Observer till early 1963 and then hopped from one PR job to another in the East Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation, the State Bank of Pakistan and Standard Oil (ESSO). He founded **Holiday** along with some of his friends in **August 1, 1965** and took full-time charge of the hard-hitting weekly in 1966. Since then he has not looked back in an adventurous career chequered by ban notices on Holiday in 1971, 1973 and 1975, incarcerations by the occupation army in 1971 and the post-independence Awami League regime in 1975 and subsequent elevation to the cabinet of the late **President Ziaur Rahman** (1977–78) and to ambassadorship (1984–89).

In his student days he held leadership positions as general secretary of Ananda Mohan College Students' Union (Mymensingh), member of Dhaka University Students' Union (1958–59) and vice president of Dhaka Hall (now Shahidullah Hall) Students' Union (1959–60). He was also the president of the progressive vanguard cultural organisation of Dhaka University and the country, the Samskriti Sangsad.

Enayetullah Khan was at the forefront of the Buddhijibi Nidhan Tathyanusandhan Committee instituted on December 18, 1971 to investigate the murders of intellectuals and prominent members of the intelligentsia in the terminal days of 1971 by the fanatic cadre of the Al-Badr and Al-Shams — the killer wings of the Jamaat-E-Islami. (London's Channel 4 made an investigative documentary on the pogrom in 1995). He was also one of the principal organisers of the Civil Liberties and Legal Aid Committee (1974) that defended and fought for the political victims of the infamous Rakkhi Bahini — the para-military instrument of repression of the post-Bangladesh regime; the Famine Resistance Committee of 1974; the Farakka March committee led by **Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani** in 1976; and the Committee Against Communalism (1981).

Enayetullah Khan is perhaps the most quoted journalist of the country in the regional and international media.